

Application of the Words Fe'l (acting), Amal (doing), and Son' (making) in the Holy Quran and their Semantic Differences

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Abstract

Due to the fact that the Arabic language abounds in words with similar meanings, eloquence in speech or writing calls for the accurate choice of words. The Holy Quran is characterized by the use of words and morphemes in absolute precision, which accounts for part of its beauty and elegance. This study addresses the proper use of Fe'l, Amal, and Son' in the Quran, as three semantically close concepts all of which lie in the area of meaning of the verb 'do'. The study is conducted through a descriptive-analytic method. First, with reference to Arabic dictionaries, the meanings of these words and their nuances are presented. Then, a number of representative verses are extracted from the Quran to show the elegant application as well as the verbal secret of those individual words. According to the results, the word Amal is used in contexts where something is regularly done by preplanning and with pain. The word Fe'l refers to an action for getting something done or made typically for a short time, but it is on no regular basis, either planned or unplanned. The word Son', however, is reserved for cases that are done with skill, care, and consciousness of consequences. The word also involves a degree of secrecy. As it is found, since Amal refers to an action which involves toil and trouble, it is never used for God in the Quran. What the Book uses in this regard are the words Fe'l and Son'. This verbal token can be taken as one of the linguistic miracles of the Holy Quran.

Keywords: Holy Quran, Word, Fe'l (acting), Amal (doing), Son' (making), Synonymy.

1. Introduction

The Quran has referred to itself as a miracle in several verses, it has also challenged those who doubt its legitimacy to bring something like it or even a single similar verse. It has stated that if you believe this book to be man-made and not a revelation, why you don't bring the like of it instead of this much war and strife (Al-Qasas: 49; Hud: 13; Yunus; 48). Still at times it provokes them to bring the like of it by calling on all their power and energy and that of their like-minded friends: "And if ye are in doubt concerning that which We reveal unto Our slave (Muhammad), then produce a surah of the like thereof, and call your witness beside

Allah if ye are truthful./ And if ye do it not - and ye can never do it - then guard yourselves against the Fire prepared for disbelievers, whose fuel is of men and stones" (Al-Baqarah 23-4).

Since one of the aspects attesting to the Quran's being a miracle is its eloquence, which has been considered by all the Quranic scholars, and since on the other hand, one of the important elements of eloquence in speech or writing is the precision in the use of words, this article aims to show the Quran's eloquence in the use of three words: 'Fe'l', 'Amal' and 'Son' and to answer the question as to how it employs Fe'l and Son' for God, but not the word Amal for Him?

At its beginning, this study talks about the synonymy of these three words and their differences; then, a number of representative verses are extracted from the Quran to show the elegant application as well as the verbal secret of those individual words.

Research Background

After browsing the net no similar research on the subject matter was found, leading to its originality.

Synonymy and its Existence in the Quran

One of the significant issues in both the Arabic and the Quranic language is the issue of synonymy or words with similar meanings. Synonyms are words with similar meanings which can be used interchangeably in different contexts and expressions. A scholar has defined synonymy thus: "Synonymy, in our opinion, occurs when two words or more than two single (and not compound) words denote a similar meaning; provided that both are factual and not virtual, original and not phonologically changed, independent and not intensified, and suggestive of the same meaning, with the same credit and value (and not like noun and adjective such as «سيف» "sword" and «صارم»¹ "sharp sword," originating in the same region" (Munjid, 1996, p. 35).

Another scholar (Abd ol-Tawāb, 1988, p. 365) has enumerated four conditions for the existence of synonymy, some of which

do exist in the above-mentioned definition:

a. Absolute similarity in the meanings of the two words: for instance, if the word 'lobe' signifies a meaning which is different from 'reason,' the two words are not deemed synonyms. Abu Hilāl Askarī has written his *Al-furūq fī al-Lughah* in the same logic to clarify the difference between words with near meanings. According to Abu Hilāl, both 'lobe' and 'reason' apparently have similar meanings, but the first one denotes a meaning which is not found in the second one (Askarī, 1979, p. 16). Likewise, the two words 'insult' and 'offense' are distinguished (Askarī, 1979, pp. 246-247; Ibn Manzūr, 1998, vol.13, pp. 453-454). Insult denotes contempt, but it is not the case in the word offense, which is sometimes merely descriptive. For example, if we call an old man as 'weak-boned' we are just describing him, it may be offensive since it connotes weakness, but we do not mean to insult.

b. Unity of origin of the language: those who believe in synonymy have overlooked this condition and have taken all the Arabic dialects as a single unified whole.

c. Contemporaneity of two words

d. Non-appearance of the second word due to the vocal evolution of the first: for example, the two words 'jadath' and 'jadaf' both mean 'grave,' but based on lexicographers (Ibn Manzūr, 1998, vol. 9, p. 24; Ṭarī ḥī, 1996, vol. 5, p. 32), the second one is just formed in the course of history by mispronouncing the 'th' sound of the first into the 'f' sound of the second, so they are not two distinct words.

Though synonymy is a possibility in languages, it hardly ever happens, even if it happens it is not regular because "a certain set of different shades of emotive and objective colors surround the signified sense and the meaning of synonymous words," whereby, immediately the precise differences in meanings are revealed, each of which signifies one aspect of the different aspects of the signified ('Abd ol-

¹ This story shows this condition: Abu Ali Farsi (d. 1050), in the city of Aleppo, in the meeting held by Seif-ol-din, used to object to and say in response to his master, Ibn Khaluyeh, who claimed to know 50 different words for 'sword,' that I know only one word for it and that is the word "saif"/'sword' itself. Ibn Khaluyeh would ask confoundedly: How about 'Muhannad' 'a sword made in India,' and 'Sarim' 'a sharp sword'?! Abu Ali would say, these are the adjectives and not nouns for sword, may be according to the master there is no difference between adjective and noun (Suyutī, 1986, vol. 1, p. 405).

Tawāb, 1988, pp. 350-351).

The dominant theory among lexicographers in the early ages of Islam was that synonymy exists in the Arabic language, even some have written books² about words with similar meanings entitled "Different Words, Similar Meanings." Some of the great figures who believed in synonymy were: Sibawayh (d. 796), Ibn Jeni (d. 1001), Ibn Sayyedah (d. 1065); on the other hand, there were some other scholars, especially after the fourth century, who were against synonymy such as: Ibn Dorostuyeh (d. 958), Ibn Fāris (d. 1004), Abu Hilal 'Askarī (d. 1004), and Zimakhsharī (d. 1143), even some have taken synonymy as a defect in language. Though it should be mentioned that both groups believe that synonymy is not frequent and that their difference of opinion concerns the very existence of synonymy and not its frequency (Javāherī, 2014, pp. 61-63). Even there are some who have denied the existence of synonymy in the Quran, but believe it exists in the Arabic language (refer to: Ibn Jeni, 1952, vol. 3, p. 133; Abd ol-Tawāb, 1988, pp. 352-353).

In addition to the lexicographers, interpreters have also zoomed in on the issue at hand. For instance, Tabresī (d. 1153) has mentioned words with a single meaning or near in meaning and has dubbed them as "Nazayer," but he didn't believe in absolute synonymy in the

² Authors such as Abu Saeed Abdul Maalik ibn Quraib Asmaiee (d. 831) who wrote the book entitled "Different Words, Similar Meanings" (Qifti, 2002, vol. 2, pp. 202-205; Ibn al-Nadim, 2002, pp. 95-96; refer to Mirjalili, 2010, p. 144) and Ibrahim Ibn Yahya Ibn al-Mubarak Yazidi (d. 839) who wrote "Similar Words, Different Meanings" (Abul-Barakat Anbari, 2002, p. 148; refer to Mirjalili, 2010, p. 144), and Hafis Ibn Omar Dori Ezdi (d. 860) who wrote "Similar words and meanings in the Quran" refer to Mirjalili, 2010, p. 144; Emil Badi' Ya'ghoub, 2006, vol. 5, p. 287) and Abol A'bbas Muhammad Ibn Yazid Mobarad (d. 899) who wrote "Same Words, Different Meanings in the Holy Quran," published in Cairo (by Assalafiyah Publishing, 1931).

Quranic words and believed in semantic differences between words which are apparently similar in meaning. Hence, to clarify the correct meaning of a word, he has mentioned words with the same and near meaning (refer to: Qhasempour, Eqhbali, and Salehpour 2010, pp. 182-183).

Apparently, the main principle is to show the incommensurability of meaning in words and not synonymy, though it does not mean to deny the existence of synonymy in the Arabic language and the Quran. The following discussion, by mentioning the semantic difference between the three words *Fe'l*, *Amal*, and *Son'*, and their applications in the Quran will clarify this fact.

2. Meaning of the Word *Son'*

2-1. The Dictionary Meaning of the Word *Son'*

The word *Son'* in the dictionary means performing a task in the best possible way, that is why every *Son'* could be taken as a *Fe'l* and not vice versa. The word is attributed to human beings but is not used to refer to animals and inanimate beings (Raqib, 1991, p.493). That is why in language we say: «الصَّنَاعَةُ، ... جَرْفَةُ الصَّانِعِ، وِ عَمَلُهُ الصَّنَاعَةُ» which respectively mean: "Industry," "Manufacturer's craft," and "His work is done." Some scholars use *Son'* in a context which shows the performance of an action with three prerequisites: skill, knowledge, and precision (Mustafavī, 2009, vol. p. 346).

Since *Son'* refers to the performance of an action in the best possible way, رَجُلٌ «صَنِيعُ الْيَدَيْنِ وَ صَنَاعُ الْيَدَيْنِ» refers to, a skillful man in a craft or work doing his job well (Jouharī, 1989, vol. 3, p. 1246; Ibn Manzūr, 1998, vol. 8, p. 209; Zubeydī, 1993, vol. 11, p. 286) and «رَجُلٌ صَنِعٌ» also means the same (Raqib, 1991, p. 493) or it refers to a male person who has a profession through which he makes a living, «امرأة صَنَاع» refers to the woman doing the same thing (Raqib, 1991, p. 587;

Ibn Manzūr, 1993, vol. 8, p. 210) and «رجل» «صَنَّعُ اللِّسَانِ» refers to a poet or an eloquent person speaking articulately (Ibn Sayyedah, 2005, vol. 1, p. 443; Fīrūzābādī, 1996, vol. 3, p. 68); since composing poetry and speaking articulately require a special language skill.

«صَنِيعٌ» refers to proper and excellent clothes (Zubeydī, 1993, vol. 11, p. 289), a polished sword is called «السَّيْفُ الصَّنِيعُ», and a polished arrow is called «السَّهْمُ الصَّنِيعُ» (Ibn Manzūr, 1993, vol. 8, p. 212; Zubeydī, 1993, vol. 11, pp. 284-285) because preparing both of them for warfare requires expertise. «مُصَانَعَةٌ» means bribery, (since doing it and contacting a judge in this way requires a special kind of skill) (Jouharī, 1989, vol. 3, p. 1246; Ibn Manzūr, 1993, vol. 8, p. 212), it also means cheating and deluding (Sheybānī, 2015, vol. 1, p. 306) which is also accompanied by a special skill and secrecy.

«امْرَأَةٌ صَنَّاعُ اللِّسَانِ» refers to a shrew (Zubeydī, 1993: 289) who has a kind of skill in language and twists reality through a special kind of secrecy. Thus, «تَصَنَّعٌ» means a person who impinges the look of a good person outside while he is the opposite inside (Ibn Manzūr, 1993, vol. 8, p. 211).

«صَنِيعٌ» و «مُصَانَعَةٌ» mean a wood container for keeping water (Khalil, 1989, vol. 1, p. 305), it also refers to the place where water is reserved (such as a basin or a cistern) (Jouharī, 1989, vol. 3, p. 1246; Zubeydī, 1993, vol. 11, pp. 289) because its construction requires skill. Valuable places are also referred to as «مصانع» (Raqib, 1991, p. 493). Therefore, palaces and wells are referred to as «مصانع» because their construction entails a special skill. Labīd, the Arab poet has said:

بَلَيْنَا وَمَا تَبْلِي وَ تَبْقَى الدِّيَارُ بَعْدَنَا
و النُّجُومُ الطَّوَالِعُ و المَصَانِعُ

“We get old while the shining stars never age/We die and leave behind our houses and fortifications” (Azharī, 2000, vol. 2, p. 24; Zubeydī, 1993, vol. 11, p.

288).

«مَصَانِعُ» here means fortifications (Ibn Manzūr, 1993, vol. 8, p. 211, Zubeydī, 1993, vol. 11, p. 288), likewise, the places far from houses, where the bee makes its hive, are called «مَصَانِعُ» (Zubeydī, 1993, vol. 11, p. 289).

To put it in a nutshell, based on lexicographers, meanings of secrecy and skill are implied in the word *Son'*. Of course, skill is usually associated with a kind of secrecy, because the skillful person keeps his expertise secret from others and does not share it with others simply. Those who face an expert can hardly make heads or tails of his expertise. Besides, the word *Son'* is attributed to a rational being and not to animals.

2-2. Application of the Word *Son'* in the Quran

Several derivatives of the word *Son'* exist in the Quran, sometimes as ternary verbs and other times as additional verbs, and still in the form of other derivatives which will be mentioned in the following discussion. In all the afore-mentioned verses *Son'* has been attributed to God or to man and not to animals. Besides, it has been used for actions that require a special skill:

2-2-1. Construction of Mansions and Ponds:

Prophet Hud (PBUH) said to his apostles: “And seek ye out strongholds, that haply ye may last for ever? ([ash-Shu'ara'](#): 129).

2-2-2. Raising and Educating of Moses (PBUH):

Two verses of Quran including “that thou mightest be trained according to My will” (Ta-Ha: 39), and “And I have attached thee to Myself” (Ta-Ha: 41) refer to Moses' training by God. «اصْطِنَاعٌ» means excessive reform and development (Raqib, 1991, p. 493). In this last verse God addresses Moses (PBUH) thus: Lo, Moses,

I've attached you to myself and trained you to be my messenger.

These verses point to the fact that if the Great God loves His subject, He'd do favor and show compassion to him, just the same as a friend who favors another friend (Raqib, 1991, p. 493).

2-2-3. Artificiality and Duplicity of the Christians

Since meaning of secrecy exists in the word *Son'*, the Quran calls the perjury of the Christians against Christ as «يصنعون», because they were hiding a truth; they were pagans inside, but in the outside they were talking of God: "And with those who say: 'Lo! we are Christians,' We made a covenant, but they forgot a part of that whereof they were admonished. Therefore We have stirred up enmity and hatred among them till the Day of Resurrection, when Allah will inform them of their handiwork" (Al-Ma'idah, 14).

According to Tabresī the statement «وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا إِنَّا نَصَارَى أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَهُمْ»: "And with those who say: 'Lo! we are Christians,' We made a covenant" shows that despite their claim, these guys are not real Christians, however, they believe in the fake and artificial Christianity, so God does not say "From the Christians" (Tabresī, 1993, vol. 3, p. 268).

2-2-4. Earth's Rotation:

"And thou seest the hills thou deemest solid flying with the flight of clouds: the doing of Allah Who perfecteth all things. Lo! He is Informed of what ye do" (An-Naml: 88). In this verse, the movement of hills (actually, earth's rotation) is said to be God's doing (*Son'*) which needs a special skill. The second half of the verse attests to it by attributing this rotation to a person who perfects everything and is well-informed.

2-2-5. Noah's Ship-building:

"Build the ship" (Hud: 37), "building the ship" (Hud: 38) both these verses are

about Noah's ship-building. Building a ship is what man as a rational being can do and not animals for they lack this special skill of man.

2-2-6. Art of Making Garments:

"the art of making garments (of mail) to protect you" (Al-Anbia': 80) garment (here armor) is a clothes made up of iron threads, worn by the warriors to protect them in wars. This verse refers to the art of making garments which can be done and performed only by man and not by animals. The Arab poet, Abu Zoaib has talked about this art thus:

"Those two warriors had two armors woven firmly by David or by the makers of big armors belonging to Tobba' tribe (who were famous in the making of such garments)" (refer to Ibn Fāris, 1983, vol. 5, p. 99; Jouharī, 1989, vol. 3, p. 1246; Ibn Sayyedeḥ, 2005, vol. 13, p. 34).

2-2-7. Making Ponds (Stronghold) by Ād Tribe:

"And seek ye out strongholds" (ash-Shu'ara': 129) this hints to the revelrous Ād tribe, and is referring to them by saying: "And seek ye out strongholds, that haply ye may last for ever?"

2-2-8. Artifice of Magicians in the time of Moses:

"Throw that which is in thy right hand! It will eat up that which they have made. Lo! that which they have made is but a wizard's artifice" (Ta-Ha: 69). It is quite evident that magic entails a special skill and secrecy.

2-2-9. The Pharaoh and his Folk's Performance:

"and We annihilated (all) that Pharaoh and his folk had done and that they had contrived" (Al-A'raf: 137).

For further study look at the following verses: "(All) that they contrive" (Hud: 16); "(all) that they are wont to do is fruitless" (Hud: 63); "And Allah knoweth

what ye do" (*Al-'Ankabut*: 45); "and yet they reckon that they do good work" (*Al-Kahf*: 104).

In all the aforesaid verses, *Son'* has been attributed either to God or to man and not to animals. It has also been employed for an action which entails some sort of skill.

At the end of this section, it is necessary to mention that the word *Son'* has also been used for both God and man in Hadiths, a case in point is: "If you have no scruple, do as you please" «إِذَا لَمْ تَسْتَحْ فَاصْنَعْ» ما تَشِئْتُ»

(‘*Alam ul-Hudā*, 1998, vol. 1, p. 643; *Muhaddis Qumī*, 1993, vol. 2, p. 506; *Nūrī*, 1987, vol. 8, p. 466).

«اصنع» is an imperative verb which is meant to be declarative, it means if you are without any scruple, you'll do everything (Zubeydī, 1993, vol. 11, p. 284). This hadith is reprimanding those people who are shameless while doing wrong works (Ezdī, 2008, vol. 1, p. 370).

There is another hadith about Moses (PBUH) saying: "You are God's interlocutor and he has attached you to himself" «أَنْتَ كَلِيمُ اللَّهِ اصْطَنَعَكَ لِنَفْسِهِ» (Majlisī, 1982, vol. 3, p. 191; *Ṭarīhī*, 1996, vol. 4, p. 361). This description is hinting to Moses' lofty state with God and his being one of those who achieve proximity to God the Almighty (Ibn Manzūr, 1993, vol. 8, p. 209).

3. The Definition of the Word *Amal*

3-1. The Word *Amal* in Dictionary

Based on the linguists' theories, the word *Amal* is referred to any action which entails the following characteristics:

3-1-1. Intentional:

Any action or work done by a living being which is intentional is called *Amal*, the meaning of which is different from that of *Fe'l*, because *Fe'l* could be used for unintentional actions of animals, and is also attributable to inanimate things. The word *Amal* is scarcely used for

unintentional actions or the action of inanimate objects. It has not also been used for the animals, excluding such expressions as: «البقرُ العَوَامِلُ» which means tilling cows (Raqib, 1991, p. 587).

3-1-2. Toiling:

Zubeydī has quoted many master linguists who have differentiated *Amal* from *Fe'l* in another respect; based on them, *Amal* refers to an action which is toiling, but *Fe'l* is a general term for doing action. He has also quoted a famous linguist who is of the opinion that *Amal* refers to an action which entails movement and the application of an organ of the body and is scarcely used to refer to spiritual movement, instead, it is performed by bodily movement (Zubeydī, 1993, vol. 15, p. 521). Likewise, Ibn Manzūr has said about *Amal* that it is: an action accompanied with some sort of toiling (Ibn Manzūr, 1993, vol. 11, p. 475). Hence, «قَد تَعَمَلْتُ لَكَ» means I toiled and tolerated torture for your sake (Ibn Manzūr, 1993, vol. 11, p. 476).

3-1-3. Regular:

The word *Amal* refers to an action which is done on a regular basis and is continuous and happens in the long-run, that's why Arab says: «عَمِلَ الْبَرَقُ: دَامَ فَهُوَ» «عَمِلَ» by which he means electricity was continuous and not momentary (Ibn Manzūr, 1993, vol. 11, p. 477; Zubeydī, 1993, vol. 15, p. 523). A person who has a profession is called «رَجُلٌ عَمُولٌ» which means 'professional' «كَسُوبٌ» (Zubeydī, 1993, vol. 15, p. 522) and it is evident that profession is an ongoing job and not momentary.

«عَامِلَةٌ» means one foot of the animal (Zimakhsharī, 1979, p. 436) and «عَوَامِلٌ» «الدَّابَّةِ» means the feet of animal which have regular and ample movement (Ibn Athīr, 1988, vol. 3, p. 301; Ibn Manzūr, 1993, vol. 11, p. 477; Zubeydī, 1993, vol. 15, p. 523). In proportion to the meaning of regularity in the word *Amal*, cows and

camels used for tilling, irrigation and thrashing are called «عوامل» (Ṭarīḥī, 1996, vol. 5, p. 430). There is a hadith from the holy prophet about zakat of animals, reading: «لَيْسَ فِي الْعَوَامِلِ شَيْءٌ» (Majlisī, 1985, vol. 6, p. 48; Zimakhsharī, 1996, vol. 2, p. 402) meaning that it is not obligatory to pay zakat for the functioning animal (i.e. those animals doing tasks) (Ibn Athīr, 1988, vol. 3, p. 301; Jouharī, 1989, vol. 4, p. 1391; Zubeydī, 1993, vol. 14, p. 523). It is clear that the animal is not tilling a soil or irrigating a farm or field or thrashing the grain by just one movement, but it requires regular movement.

«بنو العمل» means those passengers who are walking on foot; since such passengers are making much use of their feet. In a poem, Bahir Ibn Nekth has said: "He put on his shoes and passed over the bloods (in Mina)/Then he called on God and mentioned his name and got to/A place where many foot passengers take a roost/He was carefree of his family responsibilities or belongings" (Ibn Manzūr, 1993, vol. 11, p. 477).

«بِعَمَلَةٍ» refers to a noble and rapid she camel who would never abstain from carrying cargo (Jouharī, 1989, vol. 5, p. 1775). «عامل» is said to a person who is in charge of the possessions, estates and other affairs of another person (Zubeydī, 1993, vol. 14, p. 524; Ibn Manzūr, 1993, vol. 11, p. 474). State officials such as the governor and the like of it are also referred to as «عامل» (Zimakhsharī, 1979, p. 436). In a hadith by the holy prophet the same meaning of the word is used: "I've left nothing after my death, what is left should be given as charity" «مَا تَرَكَتُ بَعْدَ نَفْقَةِ عِيَالِي وَ مَوْوَنَةِ عَامِلِي صَدَقَةً» (Ibn Manzūr, 1993, vol. 11, p. 474). «اسْتُعْمِلَ فُلَانٌ» means someone has been chosen as a state official; since such officials are regularly attending to the affairs of the state (Zubeydī, 1993, vol. 15, p. 524; Ibn Manzūr, 1993, vol. 11, p. 475). Also, «طَرِيقٌ مُعْمَلٌ» means a highly frequented road (Jouharī, 1989, vol. 5, p. 1775; Ibn Manzūr, 1993, vol. 11, p. 477;

Zubeydī, 1993, vol. 15, p. 524). «عَمَلَةٌ» refers to a laborer who is regularly working with mud and the like of it (Zimakhsharī, 1979, p. 436; Ibn Manzūr, 1993, vol. 11, p. 476; Zubeydī, 1993, vol. 15, p. 522). «عَمُولٌ» means a man who is working on end (Ibn Manzūr, 1993, vol. 11, p. 475). The expression «أَعْمَلَ فُلَانٌ ذَهْنَهُ فِي كَذَا» means he concentrated his mind on only one thing to comprehend it (Ibn Manzūr, 1993, vol. 11, p. 475). It is quite evident that concentration on things for once will not render a precise comprehension of them.

3-2. The Application of the Word *Amal* in the Quran

It can be concluded from many of the cases that the word *Amal* is used in Quran, that it is an action which is done on a regular basis, such as: "And they say: The Fire (of punishment) will not touch us save for a certain number of days. Say: Have ye received a covenant from Allah - truly Allah will not break His covenant - or tell ye concerning Allah that which ye know not? /Nay, but whosoever hath done evil and his sin surroundeth him; such are rightful owners of the Fire; they will abide therein./And those who believe and do good works: such are rightful owners of the Garden. They will abide therein" (Al-Baqarrah: 80-82). These verses, after rejecting the Jews' claim that they are privileged and would say that: fire and punishment will not touch us save for a certain number of days; outrightly say that: whosoever has done evil and his sin surroundeth him; such are rightful owners of the Fire, and those who believe and do good works: such are rightful owners of the Garden. The expression «أَحَاطَتْ بِهِ خَطِيئَتُهُ» "his sin surroundeth him" is an association of the word «سَيِّئَةٌ» "sin" which renders an interpretation of it, i.e. a sin which surrounds him, and he is immersed in it so that there is no chance for true belief to enter his heart. Therefore, the interpretation of «عَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ» is that the good deed should be repeated. The plural

form «الصَّالِحَاتِ» also refers to the regularity of this good deed. Heaven is only guaranteed when good deed is done on a regular basis and hell is surefire when sin is repeatedly and comprehensively committed.

The word *Amal* is used for both good and bad works, it means good work in many verses such as: "Lo! those who believe and do good works: (Al-Baqarah: 277) ; "And whoso doeth good works, whether of male or female" (An-Nisa': 124), still it means bad work in many other verses such as: "He who doeth wrong will have the recompense thereof" (An-Nisa': 123), "and deliver me from Pharaoh and his work" (At-Tahreem: 11), "lo! he is of evil conduct" (Hud: 46), "The forgiveness is not for those who do ill-deeds" (An-Nisa': 18). (For further study on this issue refer to: Raqib, 1991, p. 587).

Whether a work is good or bad can only be shown through juxtaposition, as it can be gathered from the use of the word devil in the following verse that this is bad work: "He said: This is of the devil's doing" (Al-Qasas: 15); and the word good, in the same fashion, will mention to the goodness of a work in the following verse: "Unto Him good words ascend, and the pious deed doth He exalt" (Fatir: 10) (Qhorashi, 1992, vol. 5, p. 45).

According to some scholars, the Quran has used *Amal* with respect to a work which is rational and thoughtful. Hence, *Amal* is collocated with Elm (Knowledge), but *Fe'l* is more general. This could be inferred from the Holy Quran; since *Amal* is used for intentional actions, but sometimes *Fe'l* is used for the deeds of inanimate beings such as: "But this, their chief hath done it" (Al-Anbia: 63). (For further study refer to: Qhorashi, 1992: 45).

The Quran uses the word "عاملين" in the verse of Zakat (charity) "and those who collect them" (At-Tawbah: 60) to refer to those who are in charge of collecting Zakat, those same people who have been sent by the Islamic state to collect zakat

regularly (Raqib, 1991, p. 587).

To sum up, the word *Amal* refers to an action which involves movement, intention, regularity, toil and trouble, and entails bodily movement.

4. The Meaning of the Word *Fe'l*

4-1. The Word *Fe'l* in Dictionary

Fe'l: in dictionary means creation of something (Zubeydī, 1993: 584) or doing an act (Mustafavī, 2009, vol. 9, p. 126). Some of the characteristics of this word in the Arabic language are as follow:

4-1-1: Being more generally used either for good or bad works

Fe'l is a wide-ranging word which includes both good and bad deeds (Raqib, 1991, pp. 640-641). Arab says: "He is a generous man, he is a stingy man" «فَلَانٌ كَرِيمٌ الْفَعَالِ، وَفَلَانٌ لَنِيمٌ الْفَعَالِ» and would say «وَكَانَتْ مِنْهُ» "And there was an act of him" «وَفَعَلَتْ» no matter whether it is a good deed or a bad one (Zubeydī, 1993, vol. 15, pp. 584-585)

4-1-2. Being more generally used compared to actions with or without knowledge or intention

Fe'l covers actions with or without knowledge and intention, no matter whether the agent is man, animal or inanimate beings. That is why, compared to *Amal* and *Fe'l*, the word *Son'* is less general and more particular (Raqib, 1991, pp. 640-641). However, Zubeydī deems *Fe'l* as a movement of man by quoting Al-Saghani that *Fe'l* means creating something, hence, it is more particular next to the general *Amal* (Zubeydī, 1993, vol. 15, p. 584).

4-1-3. *Fe'l*

means an action which takes place in a short time with no regular basis, but *Amal* is an action which is associated with repetition, regularity and takes a long time to be fulfilled (Zubeydī, 1993, vol. 15, p. 584). 'Askarī is also mentioning the same

thing and quotes Balkhi that the word *Amal* is not used to refer to a single action which is not occurring regularly. Therefore, if this word is used for God, it is a figurative sense ('Askarī, 1979, p. 127). Accordingly, a poem which has been recently composed and is original is called «أَعْدَبَ: «شعر مفتعل»» الأغانى ما افْتُعِلَ، و أَطْرَفُ الشَّعْرِ ما افْتُعِلَ» (The sweetest song is the one that penetrates/ The most elegant poem is the one that penetrates) (Zubeydī, 1993, vol. 15, p. 585).

Based on the linguists, apparently the word *Fe'l* in the Arabic language is used for those works which are short and are not on regular basis, whether good or bad, with or without knowledge and intention.

4-2. Application of the Word *Fe'l* in the Quran

Quran uses the word *Fe'l* for both good works and those which are not good. In the verse: "And whatsoever good ye do Allah knoweth it" (Al-Baqarah: 197) it is used to mean good and in the verse: "Whoso doeth that through aggression and injustice" (An-Nisa': 30) it is used to refer to an evil act (suicide).

This word has also been used for God in several verses including: "What concern hath Allah for your punishment if ye are thankful (for His mercies) and believe (in Him)?" (An-Nisa': 147). It has also been used to refer to man's actions: "O Messenger! Make known that which hath been revealed unto thee from thy Lord, for if thou do it not, thou wilt not have conveyed His message" (Al-Ma'idah: 67).

In conclusion, *Fe'l* means creating something, also it means an action which is done within a short time without any regularity. This is a characteristic of both God and man's actions.

5. The difference between *Son'* and *Amal*

The word *Amal* in dictionary means toiling while doing an action, hence, a riding animal is called «بِعَمَلَةٍ» ('Askarī,

1983, p. 128).

Son' means doing an action with prior intention and knowledge as to how it should be performed and what its prerequisites are. In this way, a carpenter and a goldsmith are called *Sane'*, but it is not the same with a merchant: since the carpenter, prior to making any wooden thing such as a bed or a door, already knows how to make it and what and how much materials he needs. Likewise, a goldsmith, when handling gold, knows how to make it and what the final product will look like, but a merchant is not called a *Sane'* because he does not know anything about the future of his work, and he has no idea what may happen to him in a given deal, whether he certainly prospers or not. Therefore, it is not a prerequisite of *Amal* to have prior knowledge, that is why those state officials who are in charge of collecting taxes are called «عَمَالٍ» and not «صَانِعٍ وَصَانِعَةٍ» because they have no idea what future has in stock for them and their job. Besides, the word *Son'* entails working good and correct ('Askarī, 1979, p. 128), and in other words, having skill in doing an action; since without skill nothing can be performed correctly.

The Holy Quran has used the word *Son'* in the following cases:

A. Creation and Movement of the Earth

"And thou seest the hills thou deemest solid flying with the flight of clouds: the doing of Allah Who perfecteth all things. Lo! He is Informed of what ye do." (An-Naml: 88). This verse refers to one of the tokens of God's sovereignty and greatness in the universe saying: A Being who has this much accounting and order in his creation, is definitely aware of what you do.

The abovementioned verse is one of the verses attesting to God's Tawhid, showing God's Greatness in this world by pointing to "Earth's Movement" which is not perceptible for us. The comparison of the movement of hills (in fact that of the earth)

with that of the clouds signifies the steady, soft and inaudible movements; and the reference to «انتقان» (which means organize and solidify) talks about the time of creation and organization of the universe. This verse means that the earth is moving swiftly but at the same time softly as the movement of the clouds! The speed of the earth rotation is about 30 kilometers per minute (Makārim, 1995, pp. 568-569), and the speed of the earth rotation around the sun is almost 100,000 kilometers per hour (Rezāyī, 2015, p. 171). In a place where big and heavy mountains are moving (along with the earth) by order of God, what is proven at last is that His power is dominant over everything.

Now it is evident as to why the Quran has used the word *Son'* when talking about the creation of the earth and its movement; since arranging this movement with this high speed, which is at the same time imperceptible for its inhabitants, requires much knowledge, precision, and skill at the beginning of creation, and God does have all this knowledge and precision. Besides, He did know from the very beginning what this course of creation will lead to. At the same time, this kind of creation is not toiling for Him, hence, the Quran has not used the word *Amal*, which connotes toiling, for God. It's evident also as to why for man's actions it has used the word *Fe'l* in the present form: "Lo! He is Informed of what ye do" shows that God knows whatever you do now or will do in the future. In other words, because God knew from the very onset of creation as to what happens in the future for the earth and its rotation, He knows all about your deeds even before you perform them.

B. An Art Which Requires Expertise

The Holy Quran has used the word *Son'* to refer to ship-building and armor-making; since both these works require skill and great precision. From the very beginning the maker knows what happens at the end and what the final product is,

besides, both these arts are what only man can do no other animal:

-. "Build the ship" (Hud: 37), "building the ship" (Hud: 38), these two verses refer to Noah' building of the ark.

-. "And We taught him the art of making garments (of mail) to protect you in your daring. Are ye then thankful?" (Al-Anbia': 80) which refers to David's art of making armors.

C. The Priests' Sin (in deserting promotion of virtue and prevention of vice)

The Holy Quran, when talking about the sinners' works from among the Ummah, and the sin of the priests in deserting promotion of virtue and prevention of vice, uses two different and distinct words to express its meaning: "And thou seest many of them vying one with another in sin and transgression and their devouring of illicit gain. Verily evil is what they do. /Why do not the rabbis and the priests forbid their evil-speaking and their devouring of illicit gain? Verily evil is their handiwork" (Al-Ma'idah: 62-63).

Quran in these verses, reproaches both groups (the sinners, and the priests deserting promotion of virtue), but about the sinners and usuries from the masses it says: "Verily evil is what they do," but for the priests who have deserted prevention of vice, it uses another word: "Verily evil is their handiwork." The secret behind such a change of word is that the word *Son'* has a stronger meaning than *Amal*; since *Amal* is turned into a handiwork or 'Senaa't' when it is firmly established in man. Hence, God has taken the sin of sinners from among the masses as something shaky (transient and remediable) but takes the sin of the priests who have deserted the prevention of vice as something established and everlasting. As went on above, *Son'* refers to an action which is accompanied with some sort of knowledge, precision, and regularity and the priests who have deserted the prevention of vice, though

they possess the knowledge that this desertion is wrong, still do it. Therefore, they are not prone to be reformed easily.

The truth is that transgression is a spiritual illness, and the remedy for it is to know God, his Qualities and Orders well, whenever one achieves this knowledge and transgression still remains in him, it is like an illness in which the patient has taken the medicine, but the illness has not been remedied. In such a case, it is said with certainty that the illness is a hard and tough one and is not irremediable, just like the case of a priest who sins by deserting the prevention of vice, which is a sign that his mental illness is deteriorated. That is why Ibn Abbas, the famous interpreter has said: This verse is the harshest verse in the whole Quran (Fakhr Rāzī, 1999, vol. 12, p. 393) which admonishes and reproaches the undutiful and silent priest. So, it is quite clear that the fate of those who desert the duty of promotion of virtue and prevention of vice-especially when they are priests and rabbis-is the fate of those same sinners and in fact, they are also accomplices (Makārim, 1995, vol. 4, p. 447).

It can also be inferred from the above-mentioned verses that *Son'* entails some kind of secrecy; since the priests who have deserted the prevention of vice, are hiding religious truths. In the verse prior to the two above-mentioned ones, the talk is about those hypocrites from among People of the Book who hide being pagans 'kafirs,' those same people who apparently claim to be believers, but in heart they were disbelievers: "When they come unto you (Muslims), they say: We believe; but they came in unbelief and they went out in the same; and Allah knoweth best what they were hiding" (Al-Ma'idah: 61).

It should be mentioned that the Quran in several of its verses reproaches the hiding of God's Orders by the unqualified priests, such as in: "Confound not truth with falsehood, nor knowingly conceal the truth" (Al-Baqarah: 42). "Lo! those who hide aught of the Scripture which Allah

hath revealed and purchase a small gain therewith, they eat into their bellies nothing else than fire. Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He make them grow. Theirs will be a painful doom" (Al-Baqarah: 174).

Also in some other verses of the Quran, the word *Son'* is collocated with words which denote secrecy and concealment, such as: "Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and be modest. That is purer for them. Lo! Allah is aware of what they do" (An-Nour: 30).

In conformity with the style of the beginning of the verse, here, "modest" refers to hide and cover one's particular organs from the gaze of others (Makārim, 1995, vol. 14, p. 438), as a hadith from Imam Sadiq (PBUH) reads: "Every verse in Quran which talks about hiding one's sexual organs, means to abstain from adultery, apart from this meaning, in other cases, it refers to hiding it from the gaze of others (Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1994, vol.3, p. 429; Majlisī, 1982, vol. 101, p. 33).

The one who gazes at others' particular organs tries to covertly do it, just like a chaste person who covers and hides these organs.

- . "Recite that which hath been inspired in thee of the Scripture, and establish worship. Lo! worship preserveth from lewdness and iniquity, but verily remembrance of Allah is more important. And Allah knoweth what ye do" ([Al-Ankabut](#): 45). This verse has been used about lewdness and iniquity; since the wrongdoer tries to hide his wrong and evil action.

- . "Is he, the evil of whose deeds is made fairseeming unto him so that he deemeth it good, (other than Satan's dupe)? Allah verily sendeth whom He will astray, and guideth whom He will; so let not thy soul expire in sighings for them. Lo! Allah is Aware of what they do!" (Fatir: 8). This verse points to the main reason for all the misfortunes of the aberrant and obstinate tribes whose evil deeds appear to them as

something beautiful because they accord with their desires. Such people won't seek any advice nor listen to any criticism, they are also not ready to change their lifestyles, they'll never ponder over their deeds nor are they afraid of its consequences (Makārim, 1995, vol. 18, p. 188). That is why Quran uses the word "fairseeming," because it means that the truth of their evil is hidden and covered by their ego and wrong thoughts but they think such deeds are fair.

-. "Allah coineth a similitude: a township that dwelt secure and well content, its provision coming to it in abundance from every side, but it disbelieved in Allah's favours, so Allah made it experience the garb of dearth and fear because of what they used to do" ([An-Nahl](#): 112).

Disbelieving in Allah's favors is a kind of hiding, because "Kufr" in language means covering something. Night is also referred to as Kafir because it covers people and objects with its darkness: «كُفْرٌ» النُّعْمَةِ وَكُفْرًا نَهَا» means hiding the favors by refusing to thank for them (Raqib, 1991, p. 714), as if the ungrateful person is hiding and denying God's favors.

6. The difference between *Fe'l* and *Amal*

According to Askarī in his *Al-furūq fi al-Lughah*, the words *Fe'l* and *Amal* are different. *Amal* means affecting and doing work on a given object, hence they say: "A potter makes a pot from the existing mud and the basket maker makes the basket from the palm fronds, and the musk maker also transforms the given skin into perfume, but we cannot use the word *Fe'l* in such cases, because these makers, do not create mud, palm fronds or skin, «فعل» entails creation (Askarī, 1979, p. 127).

Since many of God's works are creation from nothing, and He is effectively the Creator of the necessary materials for such a creation Himself, Quran has used the word *Fe'l* for God and not the word *Amal*,

such as:

-. "Lo! Allah doeth what He intendeth" ([Al-Hajj](#): 14).

-. "Allah is He Who created you and then sustained you, then causeth you to die, then giveth life to you again. Is there any of your (so-called) partners (of Allah) that doeth aught of that? Praised and Exalted be He above what they associate (with Him)!" ([Ar-Rum](#): 40).

-. "Lo! Allah doeth what He will" ([Al-Hajj](#): 18).

-. "What concern hath Allah for your punishment if ye are thankful (for His mercies) and believe (in Him)?" ([An-Nisa'](#): 147).

Conclusion

The present study entails the following results:

1. The word *Amal* in dictionary refers to an action which involves intention and thought, bodily movement, employment of an organ of the body, accompanied with toil and trouble, and is done on a regular basis for a long time and is scarcely used to refer to spiritual movement and entails bodily movement.

2. The word *Fe'l* refers to an action for getting something done or made typically for a short time, but it is on no regular basis, either planned or unplanned. Hence, a single work is not called *Amal*, but it is correct to use the word *Fe'l* for it.

3. The word *Son'* refers to doing an action in the best possible way, and is used for cases that are done with skill, care, and consciousness of consequences for the doer of this action. *Son'* could be taken as a *Fe'l* but not vice versa. That is why it has been used for both God and man and not for animals or inanimate beings. Hence, the word also involves a degree of secrecy, and the meaning of skill which is involved in it also hints to the same fact.

4. As it is shown in the above explanations, the Quran's precision in the use of these words is evident. The Quran has used the word *Son'* to refer to God's

Power in the creation of the earth, and its rotation; since arranging such a rotation with high speed requires much precision and skill at the very onset of creation. Besides, God knew outrightly from the very beginning where this creation leads to, meanwhile, creation of the universe is not toiling for Him, thus, the word *Amal* which entail, toil and bodily movement is not attributed to God.

5. Since many of God's works are creation form nothing, and He is effectively the Creator of the necessary materials for such a creation Himself, Quran has used the word *Fe'l* for God and not the word *Amal*.

6. Precise and correct use of words is attesting to the Quran's being a miracle.

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