

The Function of Mental Spaces and Conceptual Blending on the Cognition of Divine Attributes in the Quran within the Framework of Fauconnier and Turner's Theory

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Abstract

The Holy Quran, as the miracle of speech and in the form of a divine book, has been used to elevate humanity's religious perspective. In the path of developing the cognition of God's attributes and reforming human beliefs in this domain, it employs unique literature. One of the Quranic innovations is the use of the audience's mental spaces and conceptual blending. This concept was proposed and presented by Fauconnier and Turner in cognitive concepts. Examining the application of mental spaces and conceptual blending in the Quran, especially in verses related to divine attributes, plays an important role in the correct human understanding of these transcendental subjects. Finally, conceptual blending and semantic mapping for conveying concepts to the audience are also considered in the present study. The present study, using a descriptive-analytical method and within the framework of semantic analysis, aims to examine the mental spaces and conceptual blending presented in the two attributes of "Creation (Khalq)

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and nearness (Qurb)" in the verses of the Quran. Since the human mind is sometimes mixed with polytheistic beliefs, and these attributes are extra-material and discussed within the absolute divine rule, understanding them is difficult and challenging for humans. However, the application of the conceptual blending method in this type of subject facilitates understanding for the audience. In conclusion, it is found that in examining the attributes associated with the two above attributes, a conceptual blending with the domains related to these attributes has taken place, which plays an important role in convincing the deniers of resurrection and disbelievers in divine Lordship. In other words, one of the Quran's methods in proving the principles of faith is through mapping human mental experiences with the input domain of divine attributes. These conceptual blends elevate their mental abstraction in the face of supernatural and non-experimental subjects, such as the cognition of God and belief in the occurrence of the Day of Judgment. This knowledge strengthens faith components and serves as evidence for disbelievers.

Keywords: Creation, Nearness, Mental Space, Conceptual Blending, Fauconnier and Turner's Theory

Introduction

Cognition of God's attributes is among the Quranic emphases, which in various verses addresses the repair, correction, and elevation of the audience's perspective.

Indeed, one of the ways to know God is to examine these attributes, and God introduces Himself to His servants in this way. Throughout their prophetic periods, the divine prophets strived to create a correct monotheistic conception of God in the minds of people. They introduced God by negating negative attributes, denying any form of idolatry or polytheism. Among the attributes that the Quran addresses in various verses are the attribute of Creator and the attribute of God's inherent nearness to mankind. These attributes held a different form and conception in the eyes of the Quran's audience. Considering the polytheistic beliefs of those addressed by the Quran regarding the Creator and His nearness, the Quran creates new and real mental spaces in this area, and employs the spaces resulting from the conceptual blending of the aforementioned areas to instill these attributes in the mind and heart of man.

The application of mental spaces enables conceptual packages, which may be non-material and transcendental in the Quranic verses, falling into the category of abstract concepts, to become understandable and comprehensible through lexical elements. The functional value of this literary art allows the mind to imagine situations and characteristics outside of immediate experience and gain a better understanding of unexperienced matters. Among these matters are divine attributes such as "Nearness and Creation." Conceptual blending, in fact, is the engineering of how mental spaces function in creating understanding in the subjects in question. This theory examines how the human mind adapts experienced and material subjects to the immaterial characteristics of the above categories and transmits a coherent, blended informative space to the mind.

What are mental spaces and conceptual blending as discussed in cognitive semantics, and whether this literary art has been used in the verses of the Quran, and what has been the impact of this application

in the verses of the Quran on the audience's mind, are the most important questions raised in the present research. The present study aims to answer the question of how the Quran intellectually convinces the audience in understanding attributes which, in the divine realm, do not possess the characteristics of matter and are not conceivable for mankind, by examining the attributes of Creation and Nearness through the implementation of the theories considered in cognitive semantics.

It should be noted that despite the abundance of articles in the field of understanding the attributes of "Creation" and "nearness to God," there has been no independent research investigating how the Quran instills these concepts in the audience through mental spaces presented in the verses elucidating these attributes, and the resulting conceptual blending.

1. Research Background

Reference works such as the book "Conceptual Projection and Middle Spaces" by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner (1994); "Theories of Lexical Semantics" by Dirk Geeraerts (2014 AD/1393 SH); the book "Fundamentals of Cognitive Semantics" by Azita Afrashi (2016 AD/1395 SH); and the book "Semantics and Quranic Studies" by Forough Parsa (2020 AD/1399 SH) are among the resources that assist the researcher in understanding the issue of mental spaces. In these resources, the researcher can become familiar with the framework of these theories and proceed to examine them in various texts.

In studies such as the article "Mental Space Construction of Senses in the Holy Quran" by Hedyeh Ghasemi Fard, Naser Zare (2022 AD/1401 SH); the article "Investigating the Mental Spaces of Surah Qamar with Emphasis on Cognitive Semantics" by Mohammad Hossein Shirafkan; Fatemeh Sahebiyan (2020 AD/1399 SH); the article "Analysis of the Mental Spaces of Satan's Discourse in the Quran" by Mohammad Hossein Shirafkan and Alireza Ghaemi Nia (2016 AD/1395 SH); researchers seek to enumerate the mental roles depicted for the audience, in order to understand abstract and conceptual matters in a tangible way, through space-creating elements.

These mental images, in categories such as the senses and Satan, have been examined in numerous verses of the Quran.

The authors, by identifying discernible mental spaces within Surah *al-Qamar*, were able to present the mental network created within this Surah from the totality of mental spaces, linked to one another through connections.

The article "A Critical Application of Conceptual Blending Theory to the Reading of Divine Treasures in *al-Mizān*" by Faramarz Qaramaleki and Bagheri (2017 AD/1396 SH) examines selected concepts from the Holy Quran and applies categories such as mental spaces and conceptual blending to the relevant verses, presenting its impactful result on human knowledge and understanding. In this article, after examining and enumerating the verses related to the phrase "Divine Treasures," the blends occurring within the concepts of the related verses are analyzed, and the function of this theory in divine and transcendental subjects is critiqued and evaluated. An important point in connection with the present research and the "Divine Treasures" article is that in both, the application of conceptual blending theory, while respecting boundaries, has been considered within the realm of divine attributes.

It is worth mentioning that despite the multitude of articles in the field of understanding the attribute of Creation and Proximity, no independent research has been conducted to examine how the Quran conveys the above concepts to the audience within the framework of mental spaces presented in the verses clarifying these attributes, and the conceptual blending that has taken shape.

2. Research Methodology

This article employs cognitive semantics and the theory of mental spaces and conceptual blending to investigate how the Quran conveys abstract concepts. To determine the scope of verses for implementation, all verses containing the attribute of "Divine Creation and Proximity" were first enumerated and analyzed, and the possibility of applying mental spaces and conceptual blending in these verses was examined. It should be noted that the application of this

theory is not possible in all verses and requires suitable space builders and a context for blending. Therefore, the presentation of verses on "Creation and Proximity" was done selectively. The present research, after identifying the verses that have the necessary and sufficient conditions for the implementation of this theory, proceeds to analyze how it is applied in the above verses.

To this end, after selecting the verses, the specific spatial elements are identified, and the conceptual blending presented in the verse is analyzed by identifying the first and second input spaces, and ultimately, the blended space is enumerated and introduced. The impact of this application on the audience's mind is also analyzed and clarified.

3. Theoretical Considerations

3.1. *Khalq* (Creation)

The divine attribute of creation, derived from "*Khalaqa*," signifies direct measurement (Ibn Manẓūr, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 10, 85) and is used in creating something from nothing, such as "*Khalqi al-Samāwāt wa al-Arḍ*" (the creation of the heavens and the earth) (al-An'ām: 1), or creating something from something else, such as "*Khalaqa al-Insana min Nuṭfa*" (He created man from a sperm-drop)" (al-Naḥl: 17) (Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 296; Ibn Manẓūr, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 10, 85). This word is used in reference to outward forms and appearances (Qarashī, 1998 AD/1377 SH: 2, 293). Creator in the sense of Maker (Farāhīdī, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 4, 151) is one of the attributes of God Almighty and means the creator of all things (Ibn Manẓūr, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 10, 85). The word "*Khalaqa*" in the sense of creation is repeated forty times in the Quran ('Abdul Bāqī, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 241), and the meaning of *Khalq* in verses such as "*Mā Khalkukum wa lā Ba'thukum illā Kanaḥsin Wāḥida*" (The creation of you and the resurrection of you is but as of a single soul)" (Luqmān: 28) is the quality of origination (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 16, 233).

3.2. *Qurb* (Nearness)

Linguists consider "*Qarīb*" (near) to be derived from the root "*Qurb*" (nearness) and define it as the opposite of distance and remoteness (Muṣṭafawī, 1981 AD/1360 SH: 9, 266; Ibn 'Abbād, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 5, 404; Azdi, 2008 AD/1387 SH: 3, 1041). The plural of "*Qarīb*" is "*Aqārib*," which means having kinship (Ibn Durayd, n.d.: 1, 623; Ibn Manzūr, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 1, 699; Jawharī, 1986 AD/1407 AH: 1, 199). The adjective "*Qarīb*" on the pattern of "*Fa'īl*" is one of the divine names. The adjective "*Fa'īl*" indicates the certainty and permanence of an attribute (Samara'i, 2007 AD/1428 AH: 65; Hasan, 2012 AD/1391 SH: 3, 203-204). The word "*Qarīb*" is repeated 25 times in the Quran and is used as an attribute of God in three verses ('Abdul Baqi, 1965 AD/1364 SH: 540).

3.3. Mental Spaces

Gilles Fauconnier introduces the theory of "Mental Spaces," stating that these spaces produce conceptual packets that take shape in the human mind at the moment of perception (Afrashi, 2016 AD/1395 SH: 146). According to Fauconnier and Mark Turner, these conceptual packets are created when thinking and speaking (Fauconnier and Turner, 2002: 40), and a new understanding of time, place, and a situation beyond what is experienced at the moment can be imagined (Evans and Green, 2006: 394).

Through this approach, a person's understanding of environmental experiences can find adaptability and new recognition in the mind within broader categories. For example, in the statement "If time could be turned back, I would not have behaved that way," a new mental space is represented, presenting an image contrary to what actually happens, in such a way that the speaker compares their current situation with a mental state (Ghorbani and Azizi, 2021 AD/1400 SH: 96). Therefore, human cognitive activities result from comparing two mental spaces with each other.

Mental spaces include temporal, spatial, domain, and hypothetical spaces. Hypothetical mental spaces are defined in two states: unreal and impossible; and unreal but possible (Afraashi, 2016 AD/1395 SH:

147). For example, in the statement "Next year, I will participate in the Chemistry Olympiad," the audience's mind can be transported to a time other than the present. Also, in the statement "In Afghanistan, women do not have sufficient literacy," the speaker creates a spatial context. In the Quran, expressing the disbeliever's desire to return to the world¹ creates a hypothetical space (wishful and imaginary) that is impossible and of the type "Regret and sorrow." Conversely, in verses that promise hope-inspiring rewards and justice to the deserving², the fulfillment of this promise is postponed to a time other than the present, assigning it to a hypothetical space (unreal but possible).

Importantly, space builders are created with conditional and adverbial constructions, prepositional phrases, verbal phrases, and nominal phrases (Roshan and Ardabili, 2020 AD/1399 SH: 168), which will be discussed and analyzed according to the topics presented in the research.

3.4. Conceptual Blending

The category of conceptual blending, proposed by Fauconnier and Turner (1994, 1995, 1998), is one of the novel functions of cognitive semantics. This category, which can be defined and presented using the mechanism of mental spaces, combines the inputs of origin and destination (mental spaces) in the blended space to construct a coherent informational unit in the new (blended) space (Geeraerts, 2018 AD/1398 SH: 431-432).

4. Mental Spaces Resulting from the Attribute of Creativity and Its Impact on Divine Calculation

One of the components of monotheism is faith and belief in the

1. Until, when death comes to one of them, he says, "My Lord, send me back, that I might do righteousness in that which I left behind." Never! It is only a word that he is saying; and behind them is a barrier until the Day they are resurrected (al-Mu'minūn: 99-100).

2. Unto Him is the return of all of you. The promise of God is true. Indeed, He originates the creation and then brings it back, that He may reward those who have believed and done righteous deeds with justice. But those who disbelieved will have a drink of scalding fluid and a painful punishment for their disbelief (Yūnus: 4).

uniqueness of God in creation and origination. The Quran makes numerous references to this issue and, with various verses, attempts to create correct mental spaces of this category in the mind of the audience.

Shirk (polytheism) in creation means believing in the existence of two or more independent creators, in such a way that none of them is under the control and will of the other (Mesbah Yazdi, 2007 AD/1386 SH: 128), such as some who, because they consider the world to have good and bad, believe in two creators (Javadi Amoli, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 580). According to what can be received from the verses of the Quran, in the imagination of the polytheistic Arab idolaters, "Allah" was considered the greatest idol and the God who created the heavens and the earth and sent down rain: "And if you ask them, 'Who created the heavens and earth?' they will surely say, Allah." (al-Zumar: 38) And they swore by His holy name: "And they swore by Allah with their strongest oaths..." (Fāṭir: 42) They started their work in the name of this great idol with the phrase "*Bismik Allāhumma*" (In Your Name, O! Allah) and considered their idols to be manifestations of the real God (Soltani, 2015 AD/1395 SH: 6). Although each tribe had its own personal and local gods, they gave "Allah" a special place (Ali, 2003: 6, 119) and considered Him the reviver of every being on earth: "And if you ask them, 'Who sends down rain from the sky and gives life thereby to the earth after its death?' they will surely say, 'Allah.' Say, 'Praise to Allah'; but most of them do not reason." (al-ʿAnkabūt: 63)

Nevertheless, they did not believe in His oneness after creation (Izutsu, 2016 AD/1396 SH: 127) and attributed the status of Lordship to their idols, considering them effective in their affairs, offering sacrifices and vows to them (Kalbī, n.d.: 23). They considered their idols effective in the affairs of the world and the determination of human destiny, and sought solutions to their problems through them (Pishvaei, 2006 AD/1385 SH: 85).

Derivatives of the word "Creation" (*Khalq*) are frequently repeated in the Quran in reference to divine creation. God continuously reminds His audience, who in their repeated and daily experiences see the majesty of the heavens above and the vastness of

the earth beneath their feet, of His creative power: (al-An'ām: 1; al-A'rāf: 54; al-Tawbah: 36; Yūnus: 6; al-'Ankabūt: 44, etc.). These verses refer to the creation of the heavens and the earth in order to cleanse the minds of the specific audience of any association in creation by directly referencing "Allah." It is noteworthy that in various verses that mention the "Creation" of God, other subjects are also raised to modify or complete the mental spaces of the audience if necessary. For example, the first verse of Surah *al-An'ām* states:

"Praise be to Allah, who created the heavens and the earth and made the darknesses and the light. Then those who disbelieve ascribe equals to their Lord." The space-creating word "Praise" (*al-Ḥamdu*) has a meaningful association with the word "Creation" (*Khalq*). This verse refers to the general system of creation and then to the darkness and light upon which the wheel of the sensible world revolves in its evolution and development, and from the collision of these various transformations, the overall movement of the world is organized towards its ultimate destination (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 7, 6). The end of the verse, "Then those who disbelieve ascribe equals to their Lord," also shapes an emotional space of astonishment mixed with reproach and rebuke, meaning that the Glorified God had no partner in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the creation of light and darkness, and has no equal in praise and thanksgiving.

Furthermore, in the noble verse, "He who created death and life to test which of you is best in deed - and He is the Exalted in Might, the Forgiving," (al-Mulk: 2) which refers to the creation of death and life, beautiful points, including the necessity of the occurrence of the Hereafter, are hidden. According to human experience and mental framework, "Life" is used for beings with consciousness and will. Therefore, everything that has life will subsequently possess the characteristic of death. This novel information from the Quran for an audience that only attributed the quality of creator to God Almighty and did not have faith in resurrection and revival, carries a special message. In addition, for the sake of remembrance and emphasis, death is presented before life. The action-oriented word "To test you" implicitly points to the testing of humans and God's accounting nature.

This word reminds the audience of the Day of Judgment and the reckoning of deeds. According to the human mind, a person who is destined to be evaluated and judged is subjected to examination and testing. Moreover, the verse itself emphasizes this point further: "Which of you is best in deed"; therefore, the word "*Li Yabluwakum*" alone conveys the calculation and evaluation of deeds. Furthermore, this word has a completely intensified relationship with "The creation of death and life"; because without life (non-existence), testing is not possible, like an infant who passes away in childhood and does not have the opportunity to be tested in this world. According to interpretations, in the language of Quranic teachings, "Death" is merely a transition to another abode for the establishment of the Day of Judgment and the determination of one's eternal position and status. Secondly, in the category of divine creation, if death is a phenomenon for the transition of humans, then it is something that can be created (cf. Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 10, 149); therefore, in this verse, the attribute of creation, death and life, trial, evaluation, and transition are attributed to God, which in itself was a transformative belief for the listeners of the era of revelation. With this introduction to the topic of creation in the Quran, the mental frameworks and conceptual blending discussed in this category of verses will be examined.

In numerous instances,¹ the creation of the heavens and the earth is mentioned in relation to matters of belief, connecting this creation to the occurrence of the Day of Judgment. Although verses concerning the creation of humankind, the heavens and the earth, rain, and various blessings are frequently mentioned in the Quran, only those instances that provide a foundation for the intended axes of cognitive semantics are referenced in this research.

Among the verses of creation in which the category of conceptual blending is observable, one can point to the verse: "And it is He who originates creation, then repeats it, and that is easier for Him. And to Him belongs the highest attribute in the heavens and earth. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise." (al-Rūm: 27) This verse, which

1. Such as: Hūd: 7; al-An'ām: 73; al-Jāthīya: 22.

alludes to the possibility of the occurrence of the resurrection, uses the word "*Yabda'u*" (originates). The Arabs of the time of revelation understood this word to mean beginning something or a task (Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 113). "*Bada'a*" (He began) is one of the attributes of God and means creating something that did not exist before, and its creation takes place in an initial form (Ibn Manẓūr, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 1, 26). The concept of "*Bad' Khalq*" (origin of creation) mentioned in the verse, refers to the same initial creation without the use of a model. In the human intellectual system, creation is not possible for them in a sudden and instantaneous manner. Any invention requires thought and design, and calculations can be presented and analyzed based on mental experiences. God announces to His audience, both believers and deniers of the resurrection, that the truth of the creation of man, in the form of "*Bad' Khalq*," has taken place initially and without the need for a model. The second space-creating verb is "*Yu'īduhū*" (He repeats it), which conveys the meaning of creating and recreating after the first creation. In these verses, in addition to presenting the power of recreating man after death and the possibility of the occurrence of resurrection, it is described as an easier creation. In the human mind and their experiences, making anything in the second and third instance is easier than the first creation.

In other words, restoring something is far easier than creating it initially. This conclusion stems from human subjective experience. In human experience, inventing something without a prior template is more difficult than restoring something. Although the attributes of "Harder" and "Easier" have no meaning for God in creation, for the Quranic audience who denies the resurrection or is doubtful about the occurrence of the Day of Judgment, recreating the powdered bones of humans creates a unique atmosphere. In a conceptual blending, the creation of man is mapped onto man's invention of something, and the repetition of invention is easy for man; thus, restoration is considered easier than initial creation. Although mapping human action onto God is done to convey this meaning to the audience, the goal is to express the concept that what is easy for man is even easier for the Lord. The

transaction between sensory experiences, such as human invention and creation, with mental concepts that are raised in the realm of belief and metaphysical issues, such as the creation of man and the world, is one of the artistic beauties that is presented in mental spaces and conceptual blending. The way mental atmosphere is created in this verse is because the phrase "*Wa Huwa Ahwanu 'Alayh*" ("and it is [even] easier for Him") is a mental expression, the understanding of which requires initially integrating characteristics from two different domains. Presenting this concept in the verse occurs in a linguistic and verbal form, but its premise takes the form of a rational truth in the mind. The mind uses a combined pattern in a four-dimensional space to explain this concept, and the attribute of "Being easy" is used for "*Yu'īduh*" ("He restores it"), to declare the ultimate possibility of the resurrection; while this attribute is specific to human invention and creation, and divine creation and human creation differ in nature and process.

In the mental atmosphere present in the verse, "Easiness" and "Recreation" can be named as two input spaces, each of which has independent features and elements, and in the blended space, the element of "Easiness" from the first input space is blended with the element of "Recreation" from the second input space into a new space, which is the result of the combination of these two spaces. This application for the recreation of man convinces the mind that disbelieves in the resurrection. This concept in the blended space conveys the possibility of recreating man after death and the destruction of his physical body.

In other words, the blended space of "Easiness" in the mind of the text recipient solidifies the meaning that God's power over re-creation makes the possibility of resurrection and the existence of accountability on the Day of Judgment plausible. Put differently, the easiness of creating something again and again by humans, from the initial input space, is mapped onto the re-creation of humans in the second input space, to a blend where human creation and the creation of humans, and the characteristic of easiness and difficulty in re-creation and creation, prove the possibility and power over it.

Furthermore, the second creation is free from any defects and possesses the same degree of subtlety as the first creation (Wise), and this act is possible for God (Almighty). The attribute "Almighty and Wise" at the end of the verse is also one of God's attributes that emphasizes this conceptual blending. "Almighty" means that God possesses attributes that others lack, and in the mental perception of humans, what others lack is not impossible for God (Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 563; Ibn Manẓūr, 1993 AD/1414 AH: 5, 374). Similarly, no deficiency occurs in the action of the Wise (Ṭurayhī, 1996 AD/1375 SH: 5, 47), and therefore, no shortcomings or inability can be found in the recreation of humans. Thus, the juxtaposition of these two attributes in the intensification (creation, beginning, recreation) is the best choice of attributes in the verse.

Another example related to the initial and renewed creation of man, which utilizes the mental space of the audience, are verses from Surah *al-Isrā'*:

"And they say, "When we are bones and crumbled dust, will we be resurrected [into] a new creation?" Say: "[Even if] you were stones or iron, or a creation of what is greater within your breasts!" Then they will say, "Who will restore us?" Say, "He who brought you forth the first time." So they will shake their heads at you and say, "When will that be?" Say, "Perhaps it will be very soon." (al-Isrā': 49-51)

The first noteworthy point in the above verses is that God intertwines the concepts of creation and resurrection in a unique way, thereby highlighting the purposefulness of the universe and divine Lordship. Verse 49 of Surah *al-Isrā'* presents the mental image of a disbeliever in the afterlife, an image that can occur in any human being. In the phrase "bones and fragments," "*Ruḥāt*" refers to anything that has been ultimately ground into softness (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 13, 115). According to the verse, the Quran, through clear indication and utilizing a mental framework, has been able to convince the polytheists, and they have no grounds for denial; they only consider it remote. This remoteness is the primary reason they equate death with annihilation. The resurrection of a human or animal after decay and transformation into bones is not a normal or possible

experience, leading to an arrogant question: "When we are bones and fragments?"

In response to this doubt, God states that even if you are stone, iron, or anything larger than that, God will still bring you back into human form. Here, the mental space of man is used, comparing the powdering and destruction of hard bones with the hardness of iron and stone. In human experience, the powdering of iron and stone is very difficult, and the transformation of this powder back into hard iron or stone seems even more difficult and strange. Therefore, God utilizes the mental space of man in this experience to proclaim His absolute power in re-creation. God, by way of *Mushākalah* (resemblance) and confrontation with the like kind (Ālūsī, 1997 AD/1418 AH: 8, 87), declares that even if you are stone and not bone, your resurrection is not impossible.

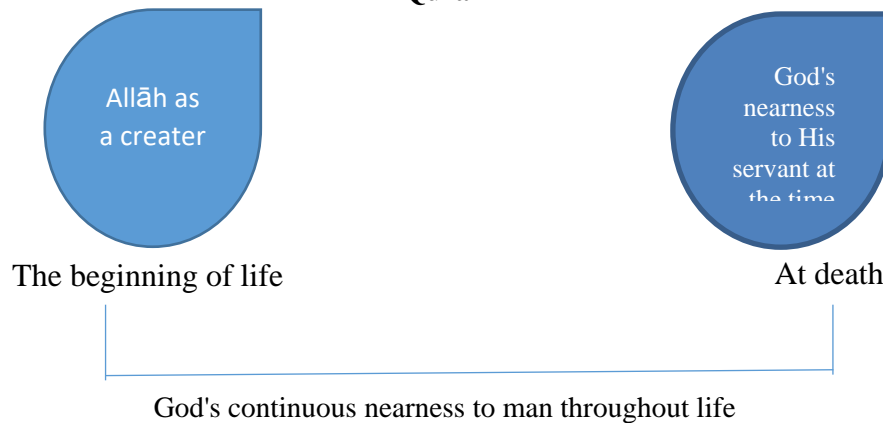
In the first input, bone, softness, powder, and grinding, iron, stone, and hardness are mapped to a new space in the second input, which consists of resurrection and revival of humans and the re-creation of humans, where the revival of humans is easier than hardening iron and stone after being powdered. In this combined space and in his mental image, the re-formation of human bone is easier than the re-formation of iron and stone because bone does not have the hardness of iron and stone.

5. The Impact of Mental Spaces Derived from the Attribute "Near" on the Understanding of Other Divine Attributes

The concept of "Divine Nearness" is a widely used and familiar concept in religious literature and belief systems. The Quran's approach to this issue and the mental image presented of the connection between God and humanity has created a profound transformation and impact on the minds of its recipients. The attribute "Near" (*Qarīb*) in Quranic applications, paints a picture of emotional spaces filled with fear and hope, conveying a deep concept and novel information to the knowledge of the audience at the time of revelation. Nearness to something or someone has been discussed in the mental space of human beings in spatial and temporal applications and has

been challenged in ontological categories in pre-Islamic concepts. The attribute "Near" is presented in the Quran as the highest manifestation of the connection between God and humankind. In the verse "And when My servants ask you, [O! Muhammad], concerning Me - indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me [by obedience] and believe in Me that they may be [rightly] guided," (al-Baqarah: 186) God reminds the recipients of the Quranic message of the reality of the concept of "Nearness to the Lord." From the perspective of Quranic interpretations, when God is "Near," He is near with His grace and mercy and answers prayers (Balāghī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 1, 162), and this nearness is the Lord's speed in answering (Ṭabrisī, 1993 AD/1372 SH: 2, 215). Nearness means encompassing (Kashani, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 1, 94), influence, guardianship, dominion, and His infinity (Muṣṭafawī, 2001 AD/1380 SH: 2, 398). Nearness is consistent with other attributes such as God being a Watcher (*Raqīb*) and a Witness (*Shahīd*), because He is constantly observing and witnessing human behavior (Āl Sa'dī, 1987 AD/1408 AH: 93). In addition, according to the verse, "But We are nearer to him than you, but you do not see," (al-Wāqī'ah: 85) humans are unaware of this constant presence of God; this nearness and encompassing of the Lord over thoughts, heart's inclinations, and inner temptations, increases a person's sense of responsibility and accuracy in attending to and reckoning with themselves. One of the most important points that can be mentioned in the area of the word "Near" is the negation of the need for intermediaries in the nearness to God (Subhani, n.d.: 1, 424).

Figure 1: Mental Image of the Connection between God and Man in the Quran



Continuing the examination of the mental spaces of the attribute "*Qarīb*" (Near) and the conceptual blending resulting in the understanding of other divine attributes, the following points can be noted:

5.1. *Mujīb* (The Responsive)

In pre-Islamic Arabia (Jahiliyya), "Allah" is a passive deity who only played a role in the creation of man and the world, and continuous communication with Him is meaningless. The space-creating word "*Qarīb*," which indicates divine knowledge and encompassing awareness of man, transforms "Allah" into an active God, giving Him an effective role in the life and destiny of man. The descriptive attribute "*Qarīb*" in this verse, derived from the morphological structure "*Qaruba, Yaqrubu*," (Ṣāfi, 1997 AD/1418 AH: 2, 376) indicates the established occurrence and realization of nearness and its permanence (Hasan, 2012 AD/1391 SH: 3, 203-204; Samara'i, 2007 AD/1428 AH: 65). In constructing the phrase "When My servants ask you", the Quran accompanies the conditional sentence with a question posed in the future, thereby emphasizing the meaning of the verse (Ibn 'Āshūr, n.d.: 2, 176).

According to Figure 2, responding to a request from an individual or something depends on the distance of that thing from him. A person

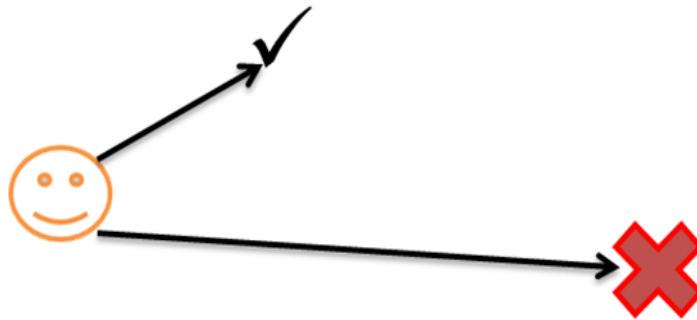
typically seeks the fulfillment of his request from a source that is closer to him in terms of location or time. Communication and response are better with someone who is closer, and the closer two individuals are to each other, the better they hear and respond to each other's messages. Also, in conventional uses, fulfilling a request and seeking something from relatives and close ones is more accessible; therefore, the principle of nearness entails the principle of responsiveness.

According to the space-creating word "*Qarīb*," the integrated pattern in the four mental spaces uses "Being near" as a prominent attribute. Although the nearness of the Lord is not of the nature of material and experiential proximity, since the nearness and distance of two things are relative and are requirements of matter. Nevertheless, the human mind connects and blends a reality with all its characteristics with the concept of the second input. In other words, something that is near is easier to observe, communicate with, and access and this concept can also be applied to the relationship between man and the Lord. In this blend, the emphasis on nearness indicates that God sees and hears with encompassing awareness and is so close and accessible that He responds "I respond to the invocation of the supplicant."

This subjective interpretation is mapped from a verbal form to a rational truth. The mind employs an integrative model in four mental spaces to explain this concept, using the attribute "Nearness" for "God" to proclaim the ultimate encompassing, sustaining, and governing of humanity in answering their prayers, even though the attribute "Near" is specific to material concepts. In the mental space created in the verse, "Material nearness" and "Divine proximity" can be named as two input spaces, each with independent characteristics and elements. In the blended space, the element of "Nearness" from the first input space is blended with the element of "Divine Proximity" from the second input space into a new space, resulting from the integration of these two spaces. The mind accepts this mapping from the material space to the metaphysical space and no longer conceives of the associated material implications. In explaining this nearness, it

aligns it with God's sustenance and encompassing of humanity, and enumerates the result as material and spiritual responses from the Lord.

Figure 2: Human Mental Space of the Relationship of Proximity, Hearing, and Response



To better illustrate, in the noble verse: "And to Thamūd [We sent] their brother Šāliḥ. He said, "O! My people worship Allah; you have no deity other than Him. He has produced you from the earth and settled you in it so ask forgiveness of Him and then repent to Him. Indeed, my Lord is near and responsive." (Hūd: 61) He clarifies that He is near because He answers repentance and seeking forgiveness, and to seek forgiveness from Him, for He is the Most Responsive (cf. Ālūsī, 1994 AD/1415 AH: 6, 286). The divine attribute "*Mujīb*" (Responsive), comes from the root "*Jawaba*," meaning to cut (Farāhīdī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 6, 192). The reason for naming the answer as such is that the answer cuts through space and reaches the listener's ears from the speaker's mouth (Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 210). Therefore, when speaking of accepting repentance, it means seeking influence and penetration from God in resolving the issue and obtaining the request (Muṣṭafawī, 1981 AD/1360 SH: 2, 136).

The use of the adjective "*Mujīb*" instead of words like "Acceptance" or "Fulfillment" of the servant's request carries a subtle point. Interpretations state that the reason for God's closeness to His servants is that the supplicant is His servant, and the reason for

unconditional acceptance is their supplication itself, which indicates God's nearness to them (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 10, 309). In addition to being described as "*Qarīb*" (Near) and "*Mujīb*" (Responsive), divine Lordship is also explicitly mentioned (Indeed, my Lord is Near and Responsive). Considering the deep connection between the attribute "*Qarīb*" (Near) and divine Lordship, one can imagine what takes place in the mind of man and in the interconnected sphere.

5.2. *Samī'*/Rabb (All-Hearing/Lord)

Among other divine attributes that, in association with the word "*Qarīb*" (Near), create an atmosphere for understanding this word, is the attribute "*Samī'*" (All-Hearing) in the verse: "Say, "If I should go astray, I only go astray against myself. But if I am guided, it is by what my Lord reveals to me. Indeed, He is All-Hearing, Near." (Saba': 50) The word "*Samī'*" signifies the human power of hearing in perceiving sounds (Ibn Manẓūr, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 8, 162; Farāhīdī, 1988 AD/1409 AH: 1, 348); and God is inherently All-Hearing, whether there is something to be heard or not. However, no sound, even a hidden one, escapes His perception (Qarashī, 1992 AD/1371 SH: 3, 327). According to the verse, God's being All-Hearing is due to His nearness to His servant, and nothing stands between Him and man, and nothing remains hidden from Him. In reference to divine knowledge, it is mentioned in the two preceding verses:

"Say, "My Lord hurls the truth. Knower of the unseen." (Saba': 48) Therefore, nothing that disrupts God's command or hinders the influence of His will and guidance of people is hidden from Him (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 16, 588). He hears the one who calls upon Him and is near to Him because He responds without delay, and He is not far from His servant so that He needs to be reached by calling out to Him; therefore, the verse uses "*Samī' Qarīb*" (All-Hearing, Near) (Fakhruddīn Rāzī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 25, 217). One of the ways man connects with the outside world is through the sense of hearing. In the human mind, the closer something is, the better one

can establish auditory communication with it. With this mental image, hearing is limited to the distance between a person and the person or phenomenon in front of them.

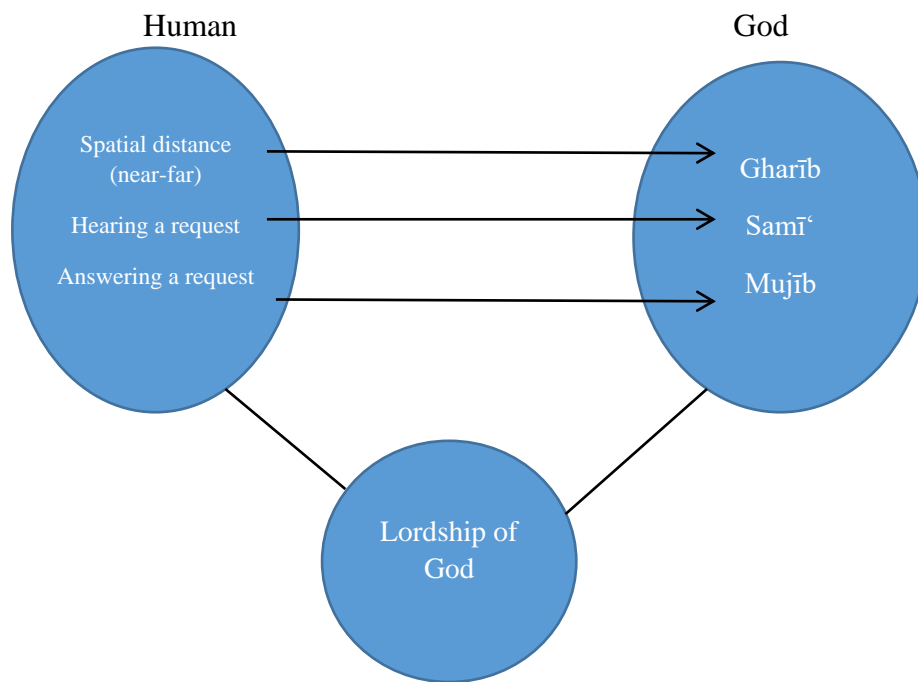
The closer one is to the object of perception (*Mudrak*), the greater the possibility of hearing (*Sam* ') becomes. This perceptual experience makes the conceptual connection between the words "Nearness" (*Qurb*) and "Hearing" (*Sam* ') meaningful in the sentence. In this type of Quranic text, involving hearing, knowledge, or response, in conjunction with nearness, the topics are addressed in such a way that they seem to reflect the real world, and rational logic, as well as cause-and-effect relationships of the real world, governs them. Nevertheless, human senses, as perceptive faculties, are limited in scope and play a role in preliminary understanding in relation to God. According to Figure (2), in the physical and experiential realm, and according to the rules of their environment, humans have a very good mental understanding of the connection between "All-Hearing" (*Samī* ') and "Near" (*Qarīb*) and the relationship between the two. Meanwhile, the Lord introduces Himself as being free from any physicality or material laws; therefore, the servant understands being All-Hearing and Near to the Lord as detached from physicality, the properties of the physical ear, and spatial distance. The servant analyzes this relationship, while preserving the same attributes and characteristics, in the second input space, which is the "Metaphysical Space." This mental elevation and semantic transformation allows humans to accustom their minds to understanding metaphysical and super-material matters, and to have a correct understanding of divine hearing and nearness without the necessity of spatial discussion. Another point is that one of the relationships considered between God and creation is that creatures, in the origin and emergence of their existence and in all aspects of their being, are dependent on God Almighty and have no independence whatsoever. He can act upon them and manage their affairs in any way He wills. The concept of management necessitates numerous instances, such as preserving and maintaining, giving life and causing death, providing sustenance,

bringing to growth and perfection, guiding, and commanding and forbidding. In His formative Lordship, God manages the beings, and in His legislative Lordship, specific to conscious and free beings, He sends messengers, reveals divine books, assigns duties, and establishes laws and regulations. In His absolute Lordship, God places the resolution of the affairs of some creatures in dependence on other creatures.

In other words, Almighty God is an intermediary between the human soul and the soul itself, and between the human soul and its effects and actions. Therefore, God is closer to man than man is to himself in every way. Understanding this precise meaning is difficult for most people.

In verse 50 of Surah Saba, Almighty God connects His hearing and proximity to His being the Lord (Rabb), and uses "*Rabb*" instead of names like "*Allah*" or "*Ilāh*." This is because proximity and hearing have a more effective manifestation and representation in the attribute of divine Lordship, the explanations of which were mentioned in the section on hearing.

Figure (3): Conceptual blending resulting from the first and second input spaces in the attribute of proximity, hearing, and response



5.3. *ʿAlīm* (All-Knowing)

The concept of the Lord's proximity to His servants and the unbroken relationship between Him and humanity is among the subjects presented in the Quran by utilizing the art of mental space construction and creating semantic blending. For example, God states in the verse, "And We have already created man and know what his soul whispers to him, and We are closer to him than [his] jugular vein," (Qāf: 16) expressing His closeness in the best possible analogy in experiential and tangible matters. In general, understanding experiential and material matters is more tangible for man, and profound subjects with sublime and immaterial themes must be presented to him with the help of mental spaces. The concept of God's encompassing knowledge of man and His awareness of his conditions and needs is emphasized in "The jugular vein."

According to commentators, the "Jugular vein" is a vital vein connected to the heart or liver of a person, and the cessation of its function causes death. In other words, man's existence depends on the existence of this vein (Makarem Shirazi, 1995 AD/1374 SH: 22, 245; Amīn, 1982 AD/1361 SH: 13, 274-275). Being closer is a metaphor for spiritual proximity in the form of a tangible image (Ibn 'Arabī, 2001 AD/1422 AH: 2, 278) and emphasizes the encompassing and sustaining power of God; that is, because man's existence is in God's hands, the function of this vein is also dependent on God (Amīn, 1982 AD/1361 SH: 13, 274-275).

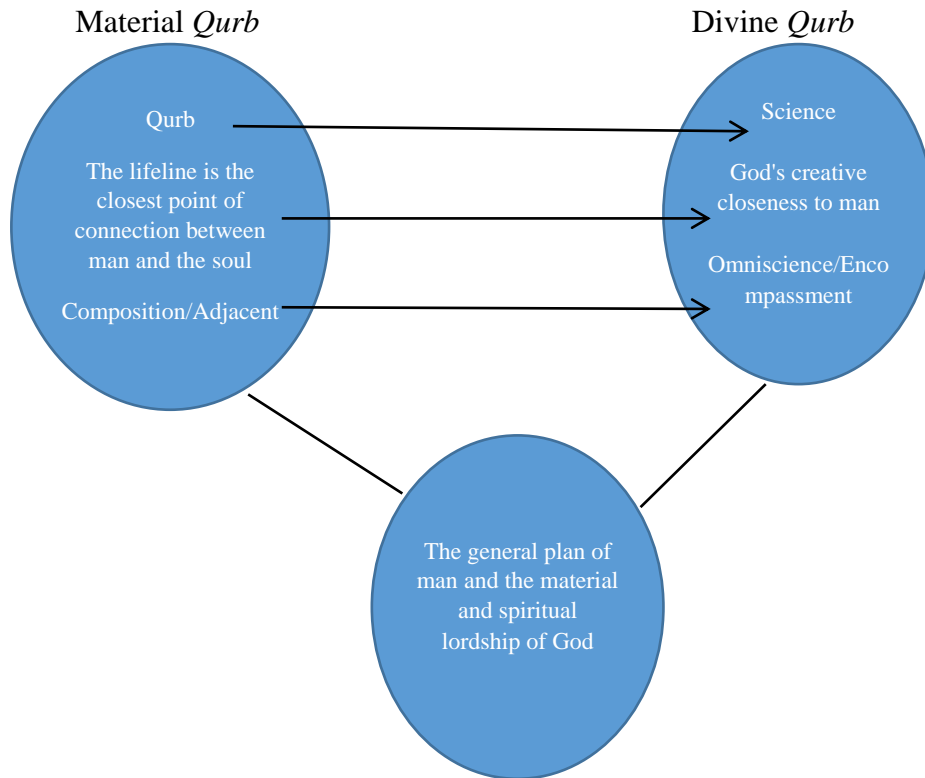
Therefore, Almighty God suffices with this and considers Himself closer to him than his jugular vein (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1996 AD/1417 AH: 18, 364). Some commentators also interpret proximity as a metaphor for dominion (Thaqafi, 2019 AD/1398 SH: 5, 54), power (Tha'ālibī, 1997 AD/1418 AH: 5, 282), and God's encompassing guardianship and knowledge of humankind (Ṭayyib, 1999 AD/1378 SH: 12, 245). It should be noted that the uses of the superlative "*Aqrabu*: Nearest" in the Quran are derived from the form "*Qaruba, Yaqrubu*" (to be near, he is near) and, according to grammarians, indicate the permanence and stability of the situation (Hasan, 2012 AD/1391 SH: 3, 203). According to the verse, God's knowledge in the present tense form "*Na'lamu mā Tuwaswisu bihī Nafsuhū*" (We know what his soul whispers to him) signifies continuity and refers to the most subtle forms of knowledge. Contrary to the views of the oral tradition of the time of revelation, in the intellectual space of the Quran, "Allah" is a single and absent God who, after "creating" the world and humankind, has taken upon Himself the Lordship of the universe and has not delegated this matter to (other gods). The attribute of knowledge in the word "*Na'lamu*" (We know) and proximity in "*Aqrabu*" (nearest), alongside the word creation "*Khalaqnā*" (We created), create new positions for "Allah," who was known to the pre-Islamic Arabs.

In the human mind, in addition to hearing and answering, attributes such as encompassing, overseeing, and knowing are limited to one's distance from that thing or phenomenon. The smaller the

spatial, positional, or even spiritual distance between a person and an individual or phenomenon in the tangible world, the more possible it becomes to identify and understand it, and vice versa. Therefore, the combination of "Proximity" and "Knowledge" is desirable and acceptable in the human mind. In human experience, a person's or animal's jugular vein is severed by cutting, and life departs from them. A person's being alive and their vital signs depend on a soul that is connected to the body. The human mind considers anything connected to another phenomenon to be separate despite the connection; for example, between the soul and the living and awake body, despite a continuous connection; it posits a separation and considers them two separate and dual things. The verse declares that God is close to something that is connected to Him, without any distance, and that there is a true companionship and union between the two. This expression of proximity creates an inseparable closeness in the human mind, and since it is not related to sensory matters, in its imagination, it embodies the sense of divine domination over its existence, mind, and heart.

According to Figure 4, in the first input space, the proximity and connection between two things possess characteristics such as combination and adjacency. These characteristics are not definable in the second input space, where one of the parties possesses an immaterial nature and, while having divine attributes. Therefore, material combination and adjacency are mapped to the blended space and are interpreted as God's encompassing and scientific dominance over him/her (human). The result and application of this dominance are directed towards the general management of humanity and His Lordship (*Rubūbīyyat*) over him/her in worldly and afterlife matters. Furthermore, it causes man to always see God as present in his actions and to maintain vigilance in his deeds and behavior.

Figure 4: Conceptual blending resulting from the first and second input spaces in the attribute of nearness, knowledge.



Conclusion

1. The mental habit of humans when hearing a word or sentence is to imagine its physical and material meaning and, before any other meaning, to seek a sensory concept and empirical requirements. On the other hand, humans deal with the worldly realm and its materials. For example, if the words creation, nearness, and the like are heard, their empirical and sensory meanings immediately come to mind, or attributes such as hearing, knowledge, and divine Lordship evoke their natural and material instances. From the beginning, man has been able to understand a meaning by assigning a word to a designatum; however, the above-mentioned cases belong to a realm beyond matter, and the requirements of its essence and attributes have no affinity with


the material world. These attributes and related themes belong to the metaphysical realm, and the Quran engages in content creation to transition from the establishment of mental spaces to the blended space. This method is very effective and practical in proving doctrinal concepts to opponents and deniers.

2. In a semantic blend, in the first input space, assuming the sensory aspects of the issue, such as hearing, nearness, creation, etc., the characteristics are mapped to the second input space, and the Quran's purpose is achieved in the blended space, without necessarily considering the same inherent characteristics or attributes in the first input space. This method is applicable to other divine attributes in the Quran.


3. The Quran, through the art of conceptual blending, has been able to use the attribute of "Nearness" (*Qurb*) to prove and explain its other attributes. What Fauconnier and Turner have presented in the form of conceptual blending has been beautifully and effectively applied in the Quran. The important point is that in explaining Quranic truths such as the attributes of Nearness (*Qurb*), Response (*Ijābah*), Lordship (*Rubūbiyyah*), and Hearing (*Sam'*) and others, care must be taken to ensure that this application is free from definition within material frameworks and that all forms of anthropomorphism are avoided.

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