

Contrastive Lexical Semantics of Biblical *Soul* and Qur'anic *Ruḥ*: *An Application of Intertextuality*

Mustafa Ali Harb

Ph.D. Candidate in Linguistics

College of Sciences & Humanities, Department of English, Ball State University, USA

Tel: 1-571-313-9322 E-mail: maharb@bsu.edu

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to see how two lexical entries (i.e., Biblical *soul*, and Qur'anic *ruḥ*) are defined in religious discourses, namely, the Holy Book of Quran and the Holy Bible, from which data necessary for this study were collected. Several verses were cited throughout this paper mainly from two corpora: 1) the Qur'anic Arabic Corpus and 2) King James Bible Online. As for machinery, the researcher carried a three-level analysis. In the first level, the denotational and connotational meanings of these lemmas (dictionary entries) in major English and Arabic dictionaries were provided. English dictionaries were Oxford English Dictionary and the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language. Arabic dictionaries were *lisaan alʿArab* (Lit: the Tongue of The Arabs) and *al muḥeet* (Lit: The Ocean). In the second level of analysis, the meanings of these words were sought in the interpretations of major Muslim and Christian scholars. The final level of analysis was an attempt to provide detailed definitions of the words in study from within the Quran and the Bible through invoking what these words mean. The results of this study indicated that each of the studied words has differently distinctive meanings in terms of scope, dimensions, and implications. Accordingly, the study recommends (1) adopting such meanings when interpreting religious discourses (2) accepting intertextuality as an invaluable approach to understanding the meaning of words in the Holy Book of Quran and the Holy Bible.

Keywords: Intertextuality, Word meaning, The holy quran, The holy bible, Biblical *Soul*, Qur'anic *Ruḥ*, Word studies, Religious discourse

1. Introduction

Several attempts (Lyons, 1995; Saeed, 1997; Frawley, 1992; Hurford, Heasley & Smith, 2007, *inter alia*) have been made to define the scope of the academic realm of semantics. Most of these, if not all, attempts are in consensus that semantics is the study of meaning communicated in or through language. Kreidler (1998) draws a line between semantics and linguistic semantics. The former refers to “the systematic study of meaning”, while the latter is concerned with “the study of how languages organize and express meanings” (p. 3). Noticeably however, all these definitions share one thing in common; that is, the word ‘*meaning*’. Such opens the door to one question that remains partially unsolved by semanticists or even lexical semanticists: what is meaning? And more exclusively given the specific scope of this paper investigating words rather than phrases or sentences, how do we arrive at the meaning of words? Or alternatively, how do we determine the intended meaning of words?

Word meaning, needless to say, is one of the central aspects to understanding the fundamental essence of any language. This understanding (i.e., meaning) may be attained through combining several linguistic features including – among others – phonological, syntactic, pragmatic, semantics, etc. Throughout the history of semantics, several definitions were attempted. Bloomfield (1933: 139) comments as follows:

We have defined the *meaning* of a linguistic form as the situation in which the speaker utters it and the response, which it calls forth in the hearer. ... In order to give a scientifically accurate definition of meaning for every form of a language, we should have to have a scientifically accurate knowledge of everything in the speakers' world. The actual extent of human knowledge is very small compared to this.

German philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (1953 & 2001) defines meaning as follows: “For a large class of cases — though not for all — in which we employ the word *meaning* it can be explained thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language” (*PI*, 43). Read (1955) states that “the word *meaning* serves to characterize the systematic relevancies that are involved in language ...” (p. 37). For Akmajian, A., Demers, R., Farmer, A., and Harnish, R. (1995), meaning is what the receiver makes up from the sender (or source) within a certain context. Unfortunately, there is no truly fixed definition of the word *meaning*. Possibly for this reason, Read (1955) declares that “the word *meaning* seems to cause havoc and confusion wherever it is used” (p. 45).

Lack of consensus on the technical definition of the word *meaning* does not imply less significance of the prominent role meaning plays in any language. Indeed, the study of meaning has been a subject of investigation to three disciplines: psychology, philosophy, and linguistics (Kreidler, 1998, p. 2). Whereas psychologists are concerned with how the human mind seeks meanings through the psychological mechanisms of learning, retention, recalling, etc., philosophers of language are most interested with “how we know, how any particular fact that we know or accept as true is related to other possible facts” (*ibid*). In linguistics, scholars have indeed realized the eminent role of meaning in language. Langacker (1987) speaks of the central role of meaning in all linguistic concerns and further argues that

“meaning is what language is all about; the analyst who ignores it to concentrate solely on matters of form severely impoverishes the natural and necessary subject matter of the discipline and ultimately distorts the character of the phenomena described” (p.12). Wierzbicka (1996) supports Langacker’s view on meaning and further states that studying language without taking into account the significant and substantial role of meaning is analogous to studying the physical properties of road signs without giving any heed to their intended meaning (p. 3). So, it is probably safe to assume that word meaning cannot be derived from physical properties. Rather, in this paper, I adopt the view that word meaning can be and is to be derived from the relations between words, following Allen (2000: 1) who asserts that “meaning becomes something which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates, moving out from the independent text into a network of textual relations.”(Further clarification will be provided in the methodology section)

The second issue raised above is concerned with how we arrive at the meaning of words. One of the most conventional methods and common practices to find out the meaning of words is to look them up in dictionaries. Needless to say, dictionaries provide many linguistic properties of lexical entries or simply words: a) syntactic (or grammatical) properties of the word such as parts of speech, transitivity, etc., b) orthographic properties such as the correct spelling(s) of words, c) semantic properties such as synonyms and antonyms, connotations, denotations, etc., d) phonetic (and phonological) properties such as segmental and supra segmental features of words, among others. In light of such considerable merits, dictionaries are of utmost significance for some groups (e.g., language learners, judges, etc.) rather than others. Judges, for instance, rely heavily on dictionaries in rendering their final verdicts. Mauritsen (2010) found that judges have frequently been noticed to base their judgments on dictionary definitions of words, especially in hard cases “in which contextual cues or legislative definitions do not decisively favor either party’s asserted meaning” (p. 1915).

Nonetheless, dictionaries are man-made and cannot be expected to be error or defect free, nor can they be assumed to leave out the prejudices and biases lexicographers may possibly bring into them. Maggs (2014) also observed the heavy reliance of judges on dictionary definitions in their final judgments, however, cautioned against their use for they suffer from six major problems summarized below:

- 1) *Insufficiency*: “dictionary definitions, even if they are completely accurate, are insufficient by themselves ...” (p. 367);
- 2) *Incompleteness*: “They [dictionary definitions] are incomplete in the sense that they may not capture all of the different meanings” of the word (p. 369);
- 3) *Inapplicability*: “[a] dictionary definition may be inapplicable to a particular term ...” for it might come from the wrong kind of dictionary [general vs. specialized dictionaries]” (p. 374);
- 4) *Inconsistency*: “judges and scholars do not always use them consistently when they are attempting to discern the meaning of words” (p. 377);
- 5) *Imprecision*: “Imprecision exists because lexicographers must choose broad definitions

that cover several possible meanings rather than providing the definition of every specific meaning” (p. 378);

- 6) *Incorrectness*: dictionary definitions do not “reflect the ordinary meaning of the word at the time [suggesting that word meaning may be change over the course of time]” mainly attributed to human errors (p. 379).

Thus, dictionary definitions incorporate several serious flaws, but have also been proven to be useful tools in finding out the intended meaning of words. It is not the intent of this study to argue for or against the use of dictionaries. In fact this study uses major dictionaries in defining the targeted words (i.e., *soul*), but it does not entirely depend on dictionaries (or other methods to be discussed in methodology); rather this study adopts the theoretical premises of Intertextuality Theory (IT) as a useful and alternative approach to understanding word meaning. The researcher hopes to determine the meaning of the two words examined in this study (English: *soul*; Arabic: *ruh*) from within the texts themselves, viz., the Holy Book of Quran and the Glorious Bible.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 An Overview of Intertextuality Theory

According to Keep, McLaughlin and Parmar (2000), the term ‘intertextuality’ is derived from the Latin word ‘intertexto’ –a derivative of Latin ‘intertextus’ – that simply means ‘interwoven’. The term “intertextuality” was however coined and introduced by poststructuralist Julia Kristeva in early 1960s in response to Swiss linguist and semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure’s claim that structured meaning in a text is what gives signs their meaning. Kristeva – heavily influenced by Russian philosopher, literary critic and semiotician Mikhail Bakhtin (1920-1995) – argued against Saussure’s notion that readers are always influenced by other texts, especially when reading new texts. Kristeva (1980) defines intertextuality as “any text [literary or non-literary] that is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text that is the absorption and transformation of another” (p. 66). Implied in this definition is Kristeva’s assertion that texts are best interpreted and thereafter realized from within the text itself (i.e., text-dependent/bound). Social and cultural influences, therefore, do not hinder (or even contribute to) an accurate interpretation of the text. She further classifies texts into two major types in terms of axes: a horizontal axis connecting the author and reader of a text, and a vertical axis, which connects the text to other texts (p. 69). According to Allen (2000: 36), Bakhtin and Kristeva “share an insistence that texts cannot be separated from the larger cultural or social textuality out of which they are constructed.”

Prior to Kristeva’s official definition of the term “intertextuality” introduced in 1980, Barthes (1975) states that every text is “itself the intertext of another text” (p. 77). In Barthes (1977), a text is “a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations” (p. 146). Below is a quote that clearly articulates Barthes’ standpoint on intertextuality:

Any text is a new tissue of past citations. Bits of code, formulae, rhythmic models, fragments of social languages, etc., pass into the text and are redistributed within it, for

there is always language before and around the text. Intertextuality, the condition of any text whatsoever, cannot, of course, be reduced to a problem of sources or influences; the intertext is a general field of anonymous formulae whose origin can scarcely ever be located; of unconscious or automatic quotations, given without quotation marks (Barthes 1981: 39).

Similar to Barthes' view, Fairclough (1992) writes that texts "are inherently intertextual, constituted by elements of other texts" (p. 270). Fairclough (1992: 271), however, differentiates between intertextual links to other texts and intertextual links to conventions (e.g., genres, styles, etc.). The theoretical framework of intertextuality has received a lot of support within the academic circles in recent years. For instance, Allen (2000) contends that provoking – what he refers to as – a network of 'textual bonds' is the steppingstone to understanding what the text holds. Similarly, other researchers (e.g., Waaijman, 2010, Kolaiti, 2005, among others) complimented the machinery of intertextuality as a linguistic methodology to examining internal relationships among textual entities.

2.2 Types of Intertextuality

Porter (1986) highlights the significance of this theory and further argues: "texts refer to other texts and in fact rely on them for their meaning. All texts are interdependent: We understand text only in so far as we understand its precursors" (p. 34). He distinguishes between two types of intertextuality: (1) iterability and (2) presupposition. The former type, as can be hinted from the name, refers to "the 'repeatability' of certain textual fragments, to citation in its broadest sense to include not only explicit allusions, references, and quotations within a discourse, but also unannounced sources and influences, clichés, phrases in the air, and traditions" (p. 35). The latter type is concerned with "assumptions a text makes about its referent, its readers, and its context--to portions of the text which are read, but which are not explicitly 'there.' . . . Texts not only refer to but in fact *contain* other texts" (p. 35). Genette (1983) proposed the term 'transtextuality' as a more inclusive term than 'intertextuality'. Five subtypes were projected under Genette's newly coined term: intertextuality, paratextuality, architextuality, metatextuality, hypotextuality (for detailed definitions of these terms, *please see Gerard Genette's Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method, 1983*).

2.3 Applications of Intertextuality: Confirmatory Evidence Religious Discourses

Several studies have been conducted to show how intertextuality can be an alternative approach to determining the intended meaning of words, especially in religious discourses such as the Quran and the Bible. The authors of these studies have dealt with the religious text as an intertext¹, in which determining the meaning of words (Biblical or Qur'anic) can be established through linking any possible relationships between the religious text and all other similar texts as to spot down similarities and eventually arrive at the intended meaning of words. Additionally, these studies call for excluding all external sources of information when

¹ In this paper, the two religious texts are seen as intertexts in the sense that the meaning of a certain word can be determined through establishing relations between its chapters. In other words, each single chapter (of the Holy Qur'an and Bible) is seen, as a text that can be best understood by visiting other chapters for the purposes of establishing relations to arrive at the intended meaning of investigated words.

interpreting the religious text; rather “information should be imported from it but never exported into it” (Taha, Al-Jarrah & Khawaldeh, 2013, p. 25).

2.3.1 Biblical Word Investigations

Baxter (2010) examined two Biblical words: a Hebrew verb and a Greek noun to determine their intended meaning in the very particular text of the Bible. To do just that, Baxter (2010) proposed a three-step model for determining word meaning in Biblical texts. The first level of analysis is determining the range of the word’s meaning. This step is twofold: a) deductive: examining the various meanings of a word offered in a lexicon and b) inductive: examining the contexts in which a word occurs (p. 103). The second step of the process is narrowing the meaning of the word in the passage being studied. The block quote below best illustrates this second step of analysis:

Look for anything in the context of your passage that may refine the word’s meaning. Elements in a passage that can limit a word’s meaning include syntactical features (e.g., for a verb: prepositional phrases, or the subject and object of the verb; for a noun: modifying adjectives, the presence or absence of the article, or the grammatical function of the noun) and greater contextual factors (i.e., what is happening in the surrounding text?) (p. 104).

The final step of Baxter’s proposed model of determining the meaning of Biblical words is consulting ancient versions of the text being studied, which may be unnecessary, but consulting ancient versions of the Bible can be used to increase the degree of assurance of what a certain Biblical word means. Upon implementing his own proposed model of analysis, Baxter (2009) is convinced that the meaning of the Biblical text can only be established only when “words are examined within the sentences of the Biblical text” (p. 89).

2.3.2 Qur’anic Word Investigations

Adel and Massoum (2011) adopted the perspective of ‘the text as intertext’ and implemented the theory of intertextuality as their methodological tool in investigating certain Qur’anic issues. Upon shedding light on such issues as paradise vs. hell, Day of Judgment, etc. and how they related to verses in other monotheistic books, the researchers argue that the Qur’an is “also [*interwoven*] with different voices and it is the production of one single voice” thus making it subject to interpretation like all other holy books (p. 47). A better application of Qur’anic intertextuality is found in Al-Jarrah (2011). In this interesting study, Al-Jarrah (2011) challenges current Muslim scholars in regards to their understanding and rendering of the grave torment. Previous thought on this issue claims that the dead are destined to experience the torment(s) of the grave as mentioned implicitly in the Quran. Utilizing the general premises of intertextuality and Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986, 1995) along with the premises of the Optimality Theory (Prince and Smolensky, 1993; McCarthy and Prince, 1993a, b), Al-Jarrah thoroughly examined a number of grave-torment Qur’anic verses both locally and globally to argue that the grave torment is non-existent and was misinterpreted (by Muslim scholars and expositors) due to failure to realize the meanings of said verses. Al-Jarrah claims that the traditional view of grave torment is erroneous and lacks

textual support from the Qur'an.

Similarly, Taha, Al-Jarrah and Khawaldeh (2013) utilized the mechanisms of intertextuality as their theoretical framework in their attempt to understand the intended meanings of two seemingly synonymous words in Arabic, namely, *al-gibaal* and *al-rawaasi*, both of which are often times translated and understood as *mountains*. The researchers contend that the two words are not entirely synonymous and consequently carry dissimilar meanings. Upon investigation, the researchers, in their analysis of the two words, found differences best manifested not only in form and functions, but types as well. As such, the researchers argued against the notion that the two words are synonymous and called for adopting the premises of intertextuality when reading religious texts such as the Quran “without needing to consult other sources of information such as dictionaries and commentaries” (p. 25).

As evident from this brief theoretical review, intertextuality is examined, interpreted, and employed differently. This makes the theory of intertextuality a flexible concept to deal with. In this paper however, the term intertextuality is used in a manner that resonates with those who believe that the text is an intertext; for the reader is capable of determining the meaning by looking for it somewhere else in the text itself. Both religious texts will be dealt with as an intertext composed of chapters, each of which is also considered an intertext to be interpreted by supplying missing information somewhere else in the text – “a process of retrieving information processed at some other stages in the discourse (the presupposing and the presupposed)” (Taha et al, 2013, p. 19). It is the intent of the researcher to find out the meaning of ‘soul’ (and its Arabic counterpart *ruh*) by tracing any relations with the conviction that “meaning becomes something [,] which exists, between a text and all other texts to which it refers and relates, moving out from the independent text into a network of textual relations. The text becomes the intertext” (Adel and Massoum, 2011, p. 44).

3. Methodology

The sample of this study is mainly composed of several verses randomly selected from the Holy Book of Quran and from the Holy Bible². Even though examined verses ($n = 25$) cannot be said to be completely randomized, the researcher utilized a method similar to generating ‘random number tables’ to ensure that the sample of studied data is most representative to warrant accurate results. In simple terms, the researcher grouped all occurrences of the words under investigation, assigned a number to each verse (1-1000), and then selected every fifth verse. Data necessary for this study constituted of one English word: *soul* vis-à-vis its Arabic counterpart: *ruh*³. The researcher implemented three levels of examination: (1) dictionaries entries, in which both denotation and connotation of the two lemmas are provided, (2) the meanings of these words were furnished as illustrated by prominent Muslim and Christian researchers and finally (3), an alternative account (that of intertextuality) was attempted as to provide alternative explanations by bringing out the local and global intuitions that these words invoke in the Qur'anic and Biblical texts as a coherent whole.

² King James Version

³ Voiceless pharyngeal fricative.

3.1 An Alternative Approach: Mechanisms of Intertextuality

By implementing the theoretical framework of intertextuality, we intend to determine the meaning of Biblical *soul* vis-à-vis its Arabic counterpart *ruh* by realizing any available semantic links that may be established via such linguistic devices/mechanisms as the following:

(1) Cohesion

Cohesion refers to the cues found in a text to show how sentences can be related to one another (Johnstone, 2008, p. 118). According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), cohesion can be of two types: grammatical and lexical. The former depends on grammatical structure and the latter relies on lexical content and background information. To create a cohesive text, Halliday and Hasan (1976) identified five devices: reference (anaphora, cataphora, exophora, or endophora), ellipsis (clause, verbal or nominal), substitution (clause, verbal, or nominal), conjunction (elaboration, extension and enhancement), and lexical cohesion (*paradigmatic*: repetition, synonymy, hyponymy, meronymy; *syntagmatic*: collocations). (For detailed linguistic definitions of these terms, please *see* Halliday, 2004)

(2) Presupposing and presupposed information

According to Halliday and Hassan (1976), this means as follows: “the one presupposes the other, in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it” (p. 4). Presuppositions can then be of four types: (1) anaphoric: pointing backward, (2) cataphoric: pointing forward, (3) exophoric: pointing to something outside the text, and (4) endophoric: pointing to something inside the text. Kolaiti (2005) further advises that presupposed information may be of four types: (1) sentential, (2) discursal across adjacent sentences, (3) discursal across non-adjacent sentences, (4) intertextual and (5) encyclopedic (p. 344-346).

(3) Global and local intuition

According to Sperber and Wilson (1986, 1995), local intuitions account for how “two adjacent segments are related” and global intuitions account for how the text “hangs together as a whole” (p. 64) “rather than constituting a series of isolated remarks” (Wilson, 1998, p. 58). They further suggest, “an individual’s total cognitive environment is a function of his [her] physical environment and his [her] cognitive abilities. It consists [not only of the facts that he [she] is aware of, but also all the facts that he [she] is capable of becoming aware of], in his physical environment” (p. 39).

Accordingly, we undertake the task of finding out the intended meaning of Qur’anic *ruh* and Biblical *soul* examined in this paper by establishing conceptual ties with the following hypothesis: every single Qur’anic Biblical verse carries presupposing information and necessitates conceptual information retrieval. As such, it is our intent to examine the occurrences of the words under investigation in several places in the text (i.e., verses) to identify the presupposed information.

4. Discussion

The two lexical entries English *soul* and Arabic *ruh* appear frequently in different verses of the Bible and Qur'an. In King James Version of the Bible, the words *soul* is mentioned 498 times. In the Qur'an, the word *ruh* is mentioned 23 times. Table 1 summarizes the frequency of *soul and ruh* in King James Bible and the Qur'an, respectively and further presents the number of occurrences in the Old Testament and the New Testament⁴, which, in turn, shows the percentage of change over the course of time⁵.

Table 1. Frequency of Soul, Mind and Heart in King James Bible

	Old Testament (OT)	New Testament (NT)	% Of Change	Total
Soul	443	55	-87.58	489
<i>Ruh</i>	NA	NA	NA	23

4.1 Soul: Dictionary Definitions

The Oxford Dictionary of English (henceforth ODE) and the American Heritage Dictionary of English (henceforth AHDE) render similar definitions for the lexical entry *soul*. Below are some of the definitions; irrelevant definitions were excluded as they do not contribute to or fall under the scope of this study:

- (a) The spiritual or immaterial part of a human being or animal, regarded as immortal. (ODE)
- (b) The essence or embodiment of a specified quality: *he was the soul of discretion*. (ODE)
- (c) A part of humans regarded as immaterial, immortal, separable from the body at death, capable of moral judgment, and susceptible to happiness or misery in a future state. (AHDE)
- (d) A person considered as the embodiment of an intangible quality; a personification: I am the very soul of discretion. (AHDE).

As evident from the above-referenced definitions, the word *soul* refers to a person or an animal (i.e., living) and is part of a whole, not the whole itself, in which another part (i.e., body) completes it, and also in which the body is the material part (tangible) whereas soul is intangible or more precisely unseen. Following Wierzbicka (1992), SOUL is something like this:

***Of a living thing
Completes the body
Intangible or unseen.***

Obviously, the above-proposed definition may be helpful, but one cannot help but notice that it does not set the distinction between, for example, soul and mind; for both are intangible

⁴ For a detailed explanation of the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament, please see Barton, 1997; Barton, 2001; Ehrman, 2011, *among others*.

⁵ However, the reader is cautioned not to conclude that these (Old vs. New Testaments) are two separate books, but rather complimentary, in which the Old Testament is foundational and the New Testament is complimentary.

and unseen. In other words, no line of demarcation is drawn as to distinguish the word *soul* from *mind*, for example. Such confirms our belief that dictionaries may be beneficial but cannot be taken for granted to determine the intended meaning of words under investigation.

4.2 *Ruḥ*⁶: Dictionary Definitions

Both *lisaan alʿArab*⁷ (Lit: the Tongue of Arabs or Arabs’ Tongue) and *Al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*⁸ (Lit: The Ocean Dictionary or the Comprehensive Dictionary) define the word *Ruḥ* as follows: (definitions are my sole translations)

- a) That of having a life
- b) The Qur’an
- c) Archangel Gabriel
- d) Jesus (Peace Be Upon Him) often *Ruḥ Al-Qudus [the Holy Spirit or Ghost]*
- e) An angel whose face is that of humans and whose body is that of angels.
- f) The Rule of God or God Himself
- g) Breath; Psyche
- h) Breeze; that of wind coming out of someone’s mouth.

Unlike English dictionaries referenced in this study, Arabic dictionaries do not explain if *ruḥ* is part (or element) of a living thing whether of humans or animals. However, it can be inferred to include both since life is a condition of having *ruḥ*. As seen also, the definitions are spiritual in general, referring to things not of this world including the Archangel Gabriel, Jesus, God, or the Qur’an, which is also the Word of God. Thus, *RUḤ* is something like this:

***Of a living thing
Spiritual or of another world***

Table 4 below summarizes the dictionary definitions of three lexical entries: *soul* vis-à-vis its Arabic counterparts *ruḥ*.

Table 4. Summary of Dictionary Definitions

	English	Arabic
Soul/ <i>ruḥ</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of a living thing • Completes the body • Intangible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Of a living thing • Spiritual or of another world

As seen in Table 4 above, there are more similarities than differences between English soul and Arabic *ruḥ*. Both English and Arabic specify that soul/*ruḥ* are of another world (i.e., the unseen world). Arabic dictionaries, however, do not clearly identify whether *ruḥ* is the complementing part of the body. Therefore, the use of dictionary definitions is not recommended when interpreting a religious text “for God has given us literary works rather than [not] a dictionary in which his message has been communicated to us. Recognition of

⁶ Arabic is a highly inflectional language, with rich morphology. As such, a definition of a single word may take several pages. Therefore, definitions here will be limited to root words, not their derivatives.

⁷ *Lisaan al-ʿArab* was completed by Ibn Manzur in 1290.

⁸ *Al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ* was compiled by Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb al-Fayrūzābādī (d. 817 AH).

the importance of context for determining word meaning has been one of the positive results of the work of modern linguistics” (Baxter, 2009, p. 89).

4.4 *Soul: Biblical Interpretations*

According to Kenneth Fortier (1995 & 2009), the word *soul* first appeared in the Old Testament as “*nephesh*” and later in the New Testament as “*psuche*”, both of which refer to the same thing, i.e., soul as rendered by most translators of the Bible (p. 1). Fortier believes the real meaning of the word “*nephesh*” has been distorted and thus miscommunicated to the layman: the word soul “means *something* within the body of a person that is immortal and thusly not subject to death” (p. 1). For a long time, this constituted the understanding of the word *soul* by most Christians “without giving it a second thought, and never think to question the validity of their belief” (ibid). Intrigued by his teachers’ statement that “the Bible was just a collection of myths and stories” (p. 2), Fortier began doubting what he had been taught: how can the traditional and accepted Christian teachings of the soul be completely different from what the Bible says about the soul? He completely argues against the “immortal soul theory” embodied in Christian teachings of the soul as it contradicts what the Verses say about the soul (p. 3). Upon investigating several authorities scholars and dictionaries, Fortier contends that such a theory is “based for the most part upon the teachings of the early Greek philosophers Socrates, Aristotle, Plato ...” (p.4) and further questions why Christians have to accept it based upon Pagan Green philosophical speculations. Upon further investigation, Fortier finds that Hebrew word “*nephesh*” was mentioned frequently in Bible to mean a wide array of things¹⁰ including, but are not limited to, the following: soul, man, person, animal, creature, mortality, breath, mind, heart, self, body, etc. (p. 5). Of such meanings, “*nephesh*” was mentioned 242 times “to say that souls are subject to death,”– a discovery that contradicts and refutes the teachings of Christianity that souls are immortal. To resolve this dilemma, Fortier goes back to Genesis, the first Book of the Bible and finds that word “*nephesh*” means one and only thing: “the results of God’s breath of life, given to all his creation, whether it be sea creatures, birds of the air, beasts of the land, all creeping things in land. Included in God’s creation, and the last thing He created, was man (Adam)” (p. 8). A closer look at the New Testaments (i.e., “*psuche*”) also revealed similar meanings, none of which goes in harmony with the Christian teachings of the soul. He concludes that “God’s word will never pass away or be covered up by the philosophical speculations and ideas of man,” referring to Greeks’ possible influences on Bible interpreters and translators.

Unlike Fortier who does not associate the concept of *soul* with *mind*, Shaund McMillan (2013), conversely, does so by writing that the *soul* is a religious term, encompassing “our mind from which we derive our thoughts, our mentality, and our heart.” Michael Houdmann (n.d.) further distinguishes between spirit and soul being the two primary aspects of humanity. The former, however, refers to the immaterial side of humanity. He explains that humans have spirits, but they are not spirits. The latter refers to both sides of humanity: material and immaterial. Houdmann further advises that the Bible depicts the soul as the center of spiritual and emotional experiences. However, he maintains that the word *soul* is often used in the Bible to

⁹ In Arabic, the Hebrew word “*nephesh*” is *nafs*. Similarly, Hebrew *Shalom* is Arabic *Salam*.

¹⁰ In fact, it was found to mean 40 different things.

refer to the whole person, whether alive or in the afterlife.

In the same vein, Smith (2013) asserts that soul and spirit are two distinct entities – as clearly articulated in the Bible – for they can be divided; hence, they are different. The distinction is best illustrated as three concentric circles: body, soul and spirit as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Soul and spirit of man

Whereas the body is seen as the outer circle, both the soul and spirit form middle and inner circles, respectively, in which the soul is closest to the body and the spirit is farther from it. The difference is as follows: the soul (i.e., inner part) contains the mind, emotions with which we contact all the things of the psychological realm, whereas the spirit is the innermost part with which we contact God and substantiate all the things of the spiritual realm.

This above-illustrated distinction between *soul* and *spirit* does not hold true according to the Bite Size Bible (2009), which maintains that both terms can be used interchangeably and synonymously. Simply put, the word *soul* stands for one's personal spirit – the enteral part of one's being. This view is in contradiction with McMillan (2013) and Smith (2013) in regards to the division between the two terms and moreover conflicts with Fortier's (1995 & 2009) conviction that the soul is not mortal. Interestingly enough, Blank (2011) has a different perspective on the subject. He contends that the original meaning of the word *soul* was physical, not spiritual. His evidence is etymological for the most part. Blank explains that the English word "soul" originated from the Anglo-Saxon word *sawel*, which meant age as in a lifetime. His reasoning is that *sawel* is phonetically and semantically similar to the Hebrew word *sheol*, "that referred to *the place where physical creatures return* after they have lived their lives."

Evidently, the very meaning of the word *soul* invites a sense of agreement and disagreement among Christian researchers. As we have seen, some believe it to be eternal whereas others see it as immaterial. Still, others view it as physical. Additionally, some set the distinction between soul and spirit, while others view them as synonymous, referring to the same thing.

4.5 *Ruh*: Qur'anic Interpretations

The Arabic word *Ruh* is mentioned 23 times throughout the Holy Book of Qur'an and is certainly a subject of hotly debate among Muslim scholars and expositors. According to Ibn Katheer (2000), the word *ruh* was referenced in the Qur'an to refer to the Archangel Gabriel, "an angel whose body is equal to that of God's whole creation or an angel who has seventy-thousand faces, each of which has seventy-thousand tongues, each of which speaks seventy-thousand languages through which they praise Allah."¹¹ Ibn-Taymeyah (1263-1328) states that philosophers divide the soul into vegetarian, situated in the liver, the animal found in the heart, and the articulating placed in the brain. Furthermore, he argues that there are

¹¹ My own translation as the original text is in Arabic.

three types of souls:

- 1) the dictating soul which follows its evil inclinations and sinful pleasures;
- 2) the rebuking soul which sins and repents and in which there is both good and evil;
- 3) and the assuring soul which loves righteousness and hates evil thus becoming its manner and conduct. (Bin-Abbas, 2014)

Ibn-Taymeyah, however, argues against the idea that there are three types of souls; for each human being has only one soul. He contends that they are rather different characteristics and conditions of just one SELF (i.e., *nafs*)

Evidently, the subject of *ruh* is highly controversial and tends to be philosophical rather than religious, which is seen as falling outside the scope of this paper. The point is that it is not clear what the *ruh* constitutes in the Qur'an and whether or not it is synonymous with *nafs*. In the subsequent sections, we intend to clarify the meaning through implementing the framework of intertextuality.

4.6 Biblical Soul: An Application of Intertextuality

The lexical entry soul – as previously mentioned – is mentioned 489 times in the Bible. Let us start by examining some randomly selected verses:

- (1) And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a **living soul**. (OT/Genesis 2: 7)
- (2) Behold now, this city *is* near to flee unto, and it *is* a little one: Oh, let me escape thither, (*is* it not a little one?) and **my soul** shall live. (OT/Genesis 19:20)
- (3) And it came to pass, as **her soul** was in departing, that she called his name Benoni: but his father called him Benjamin. (OT/Genesis 35:18)
- (4) And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of **his soul**, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us. (OT/Genesis 42:21)
- (5) Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it *is* holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth *any* work therein, **that soul** shall be cut off from among his people. (OT/Exodus 31:14)
- (6) And fear not them, which kill the body, but are not able to kill **the soul**: but rather fear him, which is able to destroy both **soul** and body in hell. (NT/Matthew 10:28)
- (7) Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom **my soul** is well pleased: I will put **my spirit** upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. (NT/Matthew 12:18)
- (8) And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all **thy soul**, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this *is* the first commandment. (NT/Mark 12:30)
- (9) Because thou wilt not leave **my soul** in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. (NT/Act 2:27)
- (10) Let **every soul** be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. (NT/Romans 13:1)

A closer look at the above-referenced verses reveals the following facts about the Biblical word *soul*:

- a) The *soul* is an essential component of man (i.e., Adam) as evident in verse (1). Clearly, man was molded into a body, whose soul was breathed in later. Thus, the body came before the soul or alternatively, the *soul* followed the body. The order is important as will see later in this paper.
- b) The soul can be either living (signifying immortality) or dead (signifying mortality) as clearly articulated in verses 2 and 3, respectively. In (2), the soul is destined to live as evident via the use of the modal verb *shall*, which semantically expresses the notion of futurity, or more specifically, expectation (CF. I will drown; no one will save me! vs. I shall drown; no one will save me!). Put differently, the use of *shall* is used to imply that the future event represents the will of the speaker rather than that of the subject. This is evidently true as no one desires for his/her soul to vanish. The claim made here becomes clearer and more complete in verse (3) that the soul was in a state of departure, establishing the semantic notion of death. Thus, we understand the soul is housed in the body as seen in verse (1) and is eventually destined to depart its house, i.e., the body.
- c) As the body houses the soul, the soul houses feelings; for feelings are unseen and so is the soul. In verse (4), the soul experiences feelings (e.g., anguish, distress, sorrow, etc.).
- d) Verse (5) yields more evidence that the soul is not immortal; for its creator can put it to death. This is achieved through the act of cutting off, which semantically denotes separation into parts, which, in its turn, yields support that the soul is seen as one of two parts of a person.
- e) In (6), the soul is affirmed to be unseen (i.e., intangible); for one can kill the body (i.e., tangible) but can never the soul. Implied here is the assertion that only God can take the *soul* away. Additionally, the body is referenced as separate from the *soul*.
- f) Verse (7) distinguishes between *soul* and *spirit*. The former is anaphoric as it refers back to the servant (i.e., human being), whereas the latter is exophoric as it refers to something outside the text (i.e., God or Jesus). Thus, we claim that *soul* is of only humans and *spirit* is of only God. The two cannot be used interchangeably in the religious text¹².
- g) Verse (8) shows confirmatory evidence that the soul experiences feelings; for humans are required to love their God with their soul. Notice how the *soul* (of humans) is the agent whereas God is the patient. It would probably be problematic for the soul to refer back to God as He would be perceived as an arrogant God – one who is in love with Himself. Consequently, once again we affirm our claim that word *soul* can only be associated with human beings, not God – as previously mentioned in (f).
- h) Verse (9) provides stronger evidence and sums up what has been said so far. The *soul*

¹² The researcher is well aware that nowadays the words *soul* and *spirit* are used synonymously, e.g., He is in high spirits or she is a good spirit, etc. However, it is the purpose of this paper to define words from within the context of the religious text.

will not be left helpless (by its creator) to experience the burning fire of hell. Implied is that it is not the body that suffers, but rather does the soul. This corresponds with our claim that the soul experiences feelings, in this case, pain.

- i) In Verse (10), the reference is made to all mankind via the use of the indefinite pronoun (every). The implication of the indefinite pronoun manifests the fact that human beings have souls, not spirits for example, subject to the power of God, who only has the power to put that soul to eternal sleep.

Thus, the Biblical word *soul* is to be understood as follows:

SOUL:
THAT OF ONLY HUMANS
GIVEN & TAKEN AWAY BY ITS INITIATOR (GOD)
EXPERIENCES FEELINGS

In addition, our investigation also revealed that the soul has been mistaken for the spirit. Given the characteristics furnished above, the spirit is not the soul, nor the soul is the spirit. In this regard, we claim that the spirit is never to be associated with humans, but with only God; for humans have been given souls, not spirits. In light of the above-cited verses, we are definitive that the Biblical word *spirit* should be as follows:

SPIRIT:
THAT OF ONLY GOD
GOD'S BREATH

4.7 Qur'anic ruh: An Application of Intertextuality

The word *ruh* appears 23 times in the Holy Book of Qur'an. Let us examine some randomly selected verses and see what lexical ties (if any) the word *ruh* establishes in these verses:

- 11) And We did certainly give Moses the Torah and followed up after him with messengers. And We gave Jesus, the son of Mary, clear proofs and supported him with **the Pure Spirit [bi ruhi al-qudus]**. But is it [not] that every time a messenger came to you, [O Children of Israel], with what **your souls [anfusakum]** did not desire, you were arrogant? And a party [of messengers] you denied and another party you killed. (Verse 2: 87)
- 12) And when I [Allah] have proportioned him and breathed into him **min rūhī [My soul]**, then fall down to him in prostration. (Verse 15:29)
- 13) And they ask you, [O Muhammad], about **al-rūhī [the soul]**. Say, "**al-rūhu** is of the affair of my Lord. And mankind have not been given of knowledge except a little." (Verse 17:85)
- 14) The Day [of judgment] that **al-rūh** and the angels will stand in rows, they will not speak except for one whom the Most Merciful permits, and he will say what is correct. (Verse 78: 38)
- 15) The angels and **al-rūh** descend therein by permission of their Lord for every matter.

(Verse 79: 4)

- 16) The angels and al-rūh will ascend to Him during a Day the extent of which is fifty thousand years. (Verse 70: 4)
- 17) And she took, in seclusion from them, a screen. Then We sent to her rūhanā [*Our Angel*], and he represented himself to her as a well-proportioned man. (Verse 19: 17)
- 18) And Mary the daughter of 'Imran, who guarded her chastity; and We breathed into it min rūhanā, and she testified to the truth of the words of her Lord and of His Revelations, and was one of the devout (servants). (Verse 66: 12)
- 19) And [mention] the one who guarded her chastity, so We blew into her [garment] min rūhanā and We made her and her son a sign for the worlds. (Verse 21: 91)
- 20) [The Day] when Allah will say, "O Jesus, Son of Mary, remember My favor upon you and upon your mother when I supported you with ruhi al-qudus [*the Pure Spirit*] and you spoke to the people in the cradle and in maturity; and [remember] when I taught you writing and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel; and when you designed from clay [what was] like the form of a bird with My permission, then you breathed into it, and it became (like) a bird with My permission; and you healed the blind and the leper with My permission; and when you brought forth the dead with My permission; and when I restrained the Children of Israel from [killing] you when you came to them with clear proofs and those who disbelieved among them said, "This is not but obvious magic." (Verse 5: 110)

Examining the above-cited verses, one cannot help, but notice that the Qur'an distinguishes between *ruh* and the spirit – a distinction manifested clearly in the Bible as well. However, the Qur'an additionally makes reference to several other words: *nafs*, *ruhi*, *ruhina*, *al-ruh* and *ruh al-qudus*. So, our task is then to attempt to set the distinction between these words. Back to the verses, the following remarks can be made:

- a) Verse (11) clearly associates *ruh al-qudus* with Jesus (PBUH¹³) as established by the objective pronoun *him*, which is anaphoric referring back to Jesus not Mary. It is our claim that *ruh al-qudus* is Jesus-specific; that is, it does not refer to God, nor does it refer to mankind (descendants of Adam). We substantiate our claim as follows: the creation of Jesus was different from that of Adam. Adam was created "from clay from an altered black mud" (Verse 15:33) or "of the dust of the ground" (OT/Genesis 2: 7), whereas Jesus was not. Jesus was a result of God commanding his angel named "*al-ruh*" to DIRECTLY blow into Mary¹⁴; hence it was pure and holy. It is pure and holy in the sense that it is not of this world, but of an angel ordered to do so. Given its purity, Jesus was capable of certain spiritualistic acts referenced in verse (20) such as speaking to the people while still in the cradle, healing the blind, etc. Thus, the meaning of the Pure (Holy) Spirit (*ruh al-qudus*) is God's SECOND blow of breath (through his angel); for

¹³ Peace Be Upon Him!

¹⁴ Into Mary's body, not garment or sleeve as rendered by most interpreters and translators. More specifically, it was into the place where man would insert his seed into woman to get her pregnant.

the FIRST blow of God's breath was that of the father of all humanity (Adam). Our selection of the order is intentional and cannot be disputed unless one believes that Jesus was created before Adam.

- b) Verse (12) confirms our claim that *ruh al-qudus* is specific to Jesus and no one else's. The *ruh*, on the contrary, is God's breath into man (Adam) with no intermediaries (e.g., *Al-ruh angel*) as clearly manifested in the verse. The reference here (i.e., *him*) is exophoric (outside the text), but it is understood to be Adam, not Jesus. Clearly articulated in the verse is that a process of proportion, fashioning or shaping had preceded that of blowing breath. This was not the case in the process of creating Jesus (PBUH) as evident in verses (17) and (18), respectively.
- c) Verse (13) presents the humanity's most unsolved question: what is *Al-ruh*¹⁵? The answer is simple and supplied in the same verse: it is the affair of only Allah; for humans have not yet comprehended its essence¹⁶; for they have given little knowledge. More precisely, it is a command of Allah – an order performed in the statement “be and it is.” Implied is the truth that it is only Allah that can order *Al-ruh* to either ascend to or descend from the Heaven. This holds true for the creation of Jesus (PBUH) for Mary did not have him in her womb for nine months. Rather, it was a command of Allah in the form of “be and it was.”
- d) Verses (14), (15) and (16) make explicit reference to the angels, who are not of this world, but still servants and creatures of God. Of significance here is the mention of *Al-ruh* on the one side and all other angels on the other side. In this verse, the form *ruh* is not that of *ruh al-qudus*, for an alternation in form yields changes in meaning. Thus, *Al-ruh* and *ruh al-qudus* signify two different things or entities. We have already established that *ruh al-qudus* is God's SECOND blow of breath into Mary through his angel *Al-ruh*, which resulted in the creation of Jesus (PBUH). So, what is referred to in verse (14), (15) and (16), respectively? We claim *Al-ruh*¹⁷ (hence definite) is the name of the angel of angels – a highly ranked angel named *Al-ruh*; he is the same angel referenced in the creation of Jesus (PBUH). *Al-ruh*'s sole mission is to execute the Word of God: *be and it is*. We disagree that such a highly ranked angel is Gabriel for the text does not either explicitly or implicitly mention the name Gabriel. The order is of utmost importance here. Notice how in verse (14) the word *Al-ruh* precedes the angels, but antecedes the angels in verses (15) and (16), respectively. Since *Al-ruh* is the archangel, it makes sense that his subordinates (i.e., angels of lower rank) stand behind him, all of whom stand before Allah in the Day of Judgment (*Yawm Al-hisab*), hence the order in verses referenced. This is analogous to the head of an army where his soldiers literally stand behind him, all of whom stand before the king. However, the order is reversed in verses (15) and (16): *the angels and Al-ruh*. We claim this reversed order has to do with the notion of directionality. To explain, verse (15) says that the angels (of all ranks we

¹⁵ Definite via the use of the Arabic article *-al*.

¹⁶ We do not claim to know so, but we will attempt something in the following sections.

¹⁷ Upon further investigation in the Qur'an, it was found that the word *Al-ruh* is always definite and always associated with angels occurring either before or after angels.

assume) come down to earth whenever asked by Allah. We imagine the situation to be as follows: least ranked angels go first, followed by lower ranked angels and so on. The archangel *Al-ruḥ* is last in the descending manner, but first in front of Allah, who overlies everything. Our logic holds true in verse (16). When the angels go up the heaven, the archangel *Al-ruḥ* goes first followed by his subordinate angels according to rank. Before God, the archangel *Al-ruḥ* is still first. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the notion of directionality discussed above.

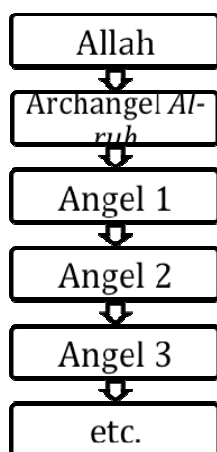


Figure 2. Angels descending

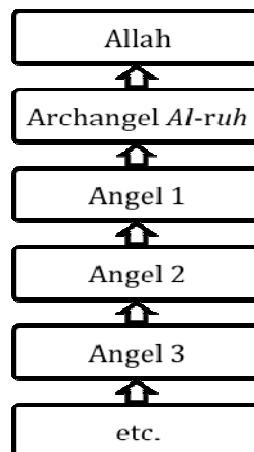


Figure 3. Angels ascending

- e) In verse (17), Allah sends *Al-ruḥ* to Mary. Proportioned as a well-formed man, *Al-ruḥ* appeared to Mary to execute a command of God, as we will see in the subsequent verses.
- f) In verses (18) and (19), we are told that *Al-ruḥ* breathed once into [her body: Mary], hence the personal pronoun *it* (verse 16), referring back to Mary's private part and once into her, hence the possessive pronoun *her* (verse 17), pointing back to Mary herself. The reader is cautioned not to conclude that the alternation in the usage of pronouns constitutes two separate stages or events, but rather a single event depicted differently in two intertextually related verses, where one denotes the beginning (*her*) and the other denotes the end (*it*). Regardless, both of them affirm that *Al-ruḥ*'s act of breathing entered Mary through her body and ended in its private part. On closer examination, one cannot help but notice the precise description of the linguistic environment of the word *Al-ruḥ*. In both verses, the word *ruḥ* is divided into two morphological segments: a genitive masculine noun (*ruḥ*) and an attached first person plural possessive pronoun (*-na*). The addition of the possessive pronoun dictates that the definite article *-al* gets dropped for the addition of the possessive pronoun makes it definite as well. The combination of *-al* and *-na* renders an ungrammatical construction in Arabic (i.e., violation of markedness). So it became *rūḥinā*. Of concern and significance to us is the Arabic preposition (i.e., *min* (*from*): of, due to, because of, some of, etc.) that precedes the word *ruḥ*. In this very context, the Arabic preposition *min* does not mean "some of or part of". Rather it literally denotes the angel *Al-ruh*, who was entrusted with God's command; that is, "be and it is". Thus, the act of breathing took place initially and then it was followed by Allah's *ruḥ*: a command (*Ḍamr*) to create Jesus, i.e., be and it is/was. The following Qur'anic verses support our claim:

- 21) Then He proportioned him [Adam] and breathed into him *min rūḥihi* and made for you hearing and vision and hearts; little are you grateful. (Verse 32: 9)
- 22) So when I have proportioned him [Adam] and breathed into him *min rūḥ(i)*¹⁸, then fall down to him in prostration. (Verse 38: 72)
- a) my sons, go and find out about Joseph and his brother and despair not *min rawhi* Allah. Indeed, no one despairs *min rawhi* Allah except the disbelieving people. (Verse 12: 87)
- 23) The Creator of the heavens and the earth; and when He decrees a thing [*?amr*], He but says to it *'Be,' and it is.* (Verse 2: 117)
- 24) She [Mary] said, "My Lord, how will I have a child when no man has touched me?" [The angel] said, "Such is Allah ; He creates what He wills. When He decrees a matter [*?amr*], He only says *to it, 'Be,' and it is.* (Verse: 3: 47)

Notice how the attached pronoun switches from first plural possessive pronoun (*-na*) in verse (18) and (19) to first singular possessive pronoun (*-i*) in verses (21), (22) and (23), respectively. We believe the switch is intentional and therefore informative. In the case of Jesus, the plural form (*-na*) is a possession of God· i.e., a highly ranked angel entrusted with executing the command of Allah in the form “be and it is”. In the case of Adam, the possessive pronoun (*-i*) is used to refer to God’s direct breath into clay to create Adam. Had it been (*-na*), the meaning would have been similar to that of the process of creating Jesus. However, the (*-na*) is to used in the case of Jesus for gratification and magnification purposes due to Jesus’ status, namely, the act or process of his creation. As mentioned earlier, the creation of Adam was different from that of Jesus. In the case of Adam, we see – from the verses of course– that he was created into three stages: proportioning, breathing into the clay and then commanding it to be man. As for Jesus (PBUH), the verses show only two stages: breathing into (Mary) and then commanding to be Jesus as evident in verses (21) and (22), respectively. Such made Jesus of special status and was accordingly supported with *ruḥ al-qudus*, which enabled him to perform miracles previously discussed. The special status given to Jesus may also be accounted for in terms of the act of breathing or blowing air. Put differently, Allah deemed necessary to breath into Adam to initiate humanity, but we claim it was unnecessary in the case of Jesus. Jesus could have been born normally like all human beings, descendants of Adam and Eve, i.e., from a father and a mother. However, Jesus (PBUH) was privileged and thus given a special status as significant as that of Adam’s. The reader is at liberty to adopt either account, both of which we believe are sound and evident in the previously discussed Qur’anic verses.

- g) Verse (20) yields further confirmatory evidence that *ruḥ al-qudus* is specific to Jesus and no one else. Jesus was given *ruḥ al-qudus*, which enabled him to preform divine miracles only with the permission of Allah, hence the four occurrences of *My permission* [God’s] in the same verse. These miracles were as follows: (1) speaking with the people in cradle

¹⁸ (PRON): 1st person singular possessive pronoun

as a sign of his prophecy¹⁹, (2) creating birds through breathing into them, (3) curing the blind and leper, and (4) bringing back the dead. Notice how *ruh al-qudus* made Jesus capable of bringing back the dead, but nowhere in the Qur'an is it ever mentioned that Jesus created people for only Allah is capable of doing so. The only reference found is that of birds and never humans.

But one might challenge our logic and raise the following question: could the act of breathing be the same as the act of commanding (*ruh: be and it is*). The answer we adopt comes from the verses and it is self-explanatory: for the act of breathing was followed by Allah's *ruh*, then they cannot be the same thing; for if they were, such would be redundant and in fact unneeded. Taking into account that the Word of Allah is most accurate and devoid of redundancy or unevenness, we believe, consequently, that the act of breathing is not the same as the act of commanding (or *ruh: be and it is*). Nonetheless, one might still ask a related question: what was that breath? What is it? We claim it is the existence (and lack of thereof) of life in the body; that is, the flame that continues to be on until it is put out by death. In other words, it is the heat in the body or simply put body temperature. We substantiate our claim by evidence from medical practices when an unconscious patient is brought to the Emergency Room (ER). The first thing performed in the ER is checking one's temperature. If diagnosed too cold, this may be perceived a sign of death: one's *nafs*²⁰ has departed its body²¹, i.e., the flame has been put out. Thus, the Qur'anic word *ruh* (and its derivatives) is to be understood as follows:

RUH AL-QUDOS:
GOD'S MIRACLE IN JESUS (PBUH)
AL-RUH:
THE NAME OF AN ANGEL
GOD'S MOST HIGHLY RANKED ANGEL
ENTRUSTED WITH EXECUTING THE WORD OF GOD (*BE AND IT IS*)

Obviously, both the Bible and the Qur'an set the distinction between what constitutes the soul/*ruh* and what constitutes the spirit/*al-ruh*. Table 5 summarizes the differences:

Table 5. Differences Between Biblical Soul and Qur'anic *Ruh*

Biblical Words	Soul	Spirit
	That of only humans; Given & taken away by its initiator (God); Subject to death; Experiences feelings.	That of only god; God's breath.

Qur'anic	<i>Ruh Al-Qudos</i>	<i>Al-ruh</i>	<i>Nafs</i>

¹⁹ Whether God, Son of God, or a messenger of God is seen as falling outside the scope of this paper and will not be pursued any further. But it is an article of my faith to believe he was a messenger of Allah like all other messengers, but most certainly of high status; in fact, Jesus had highest status of all messengers sent to the People of Israel. This is not to say that Jesus (PBUH) was human; for if he was, we would like someone to tell us where/who is the father.

²⁰ The notion of *nafs* will be handled in a different paper.

²¹ In Arabic, the word *body* could be *jism* or *ja.sad*, both of which are often translated as body in English.

Words	God's miracle in Jesus (PBUH).	The name of an angel; God's most highly ranked angel; Entrusted with executing the word of god (be and it is).	Spark of life; Subject to death; Operator of senses; Responsible for good or bad deeds.
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5. Conclusion

This article has sought to investigate the meaning of two lexical items: English *soul* and Arabic *ruh*. It argues neither for nor against using dictionaries (or any other viable techniques) or scholars' interpretations to determine the intended meaning of words. On the contrary, this paper has sought to describe how intertextuality can be a viable approach to determine the intended meaning of words in religious texts, namely the Qur'an and the Bible. As for the findings, we claim to have provided accurate definitions of the two words examined in this paper. We have established that Biblical *soul* has two forms: soul and spirit. The former refers to humans and the latter is God-specific. The Qur'anic *ruh* has been found to have three forms: *ruh al-qudus*, *al-ruh* and *ruh*, each of which carries different meanings.

6. Limitations and Significance

It should be made clear that the current study may be limited for at least two reasons. First, the study does not examine all instances of the words investigated in both books: the Bible and the Qur'an; rather, several randomly selected Biblical and Qur'anic verses were studied. Second, original Biblical verses (in Hebrew) were not examined; rather, only translations were attempted and analyzed. Nonetheless, the study is significant; for no other studies – to the best of the researcher's knowledge – have examined the meaning of the words (under investigation) within the framework of intertextuality and most importantly through the lens of contrastive lexical analysis. In other words, this study is unprecedented in the sense that data do not only come from one religious discourse but rather from two highly important sacred books: the Qur'an and the Bible.

Recommendations

The study recommends that future studies take into account the above-mentioned limitations. However, the study recommends that the framework of intertextuality be adopted when attempting to arrive at the intended meaning of Biblical and Qur'anic words; for we have shown that neither dictionary definitions nor commentaries (or interpretations) provide the reader(s) with the complete picture, i.e., the intended and most accurate meaning of words under investigation. Finally, the study recommends that further studies be conducted as to examine words deemed problematic or vague (or maybe synonymous) such as Biblical *heart* vs. Qur'anic *qalb* or Biblical *mind* vs. Qur'anic *saql*.

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