



## The Semantics of *Ḍaraba* in the Verse 34 of Surah *An-Nisa*

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### ABSTRACT

The meaning of the word *Ḍaraba* in the phrase *idrebuhunna* in the verse 34 of Surah *An-Nisa* is one of the words of the Holy Qur'ān that has occupied the minds of commentators. According to this verse, the Holy Qur'ān gives three orders to men whose wives are disobedient: advise them, forsake them in bed or beat them. Throughout the history of the Holy Qur'ān interpretation, there have been many discussions about the meaning of *idrebuhunna* by commentators, and in the contemporary era, many scholars of the Holy Qur'ān have talked about the meaning of this word. The purpose of this article is to clarify the meaning of *Ḍaraba* in this verse. Indeed, this study tries to find what the exact meaning of *Ḍaraba* in the phrase *idrebuhunna* in the verse 34 of Surah *An-Nisa* is. To figure out the meaning of *idrebuhunna*, we used the method of semantics and the method of qualitative content analysis and examined and classified the commentators' opinions. The result is that what God means by "beating" in this verse, based on the severity of beating/hitting, is the psychological beating in such a way that a man is ready to hit with anger so that the woman stops disobeying her husband; however, this does not involve the stage of physical hitting.

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## 1. Introduction

In the long history of interpretation, the terminology has been the first step for commentators in the interpretation of the Holy Qur'ān. In the contemporary era, along with terminology in the interpretive tradition, the linguistic approaches of the contemporary era are also considered. The process agreed upon by the commentators in obtaining the exact meaning of a Qur'ānic word, in the first step, is using the Holy Qur'ān itself and examining the various uses of that word in the Book of Revelation. This is followed by the analysis of the *ijtihād* of the opinions of lexicographers, commentators and linguistics. And the third step is to examine historical traditions and sayings about the meaning of that word. Here, it is also tried to report and analyze the views of commentators, scholars of the Holy Qur'ān and linguists on the same basis.

One of the words of the Holy Qur'ān that has occupied the minds of commentators is the meaning of the term *Ḍaraba* in the phrase *idrebuhunna* in the verse 34 of Surah *An-Nisa*. According to this verse, the Holy Qur'ān gives three orders to men whose wives are disobedient: advise them, forsake them in bed or beat them. Throughout the history of interpretation, there have been many discussions about the meaning of *idrebuhunna* by commentators, many scholars of the Holy Qur'ān have spoken about the meaning of this term and in the contemporary era. Based on this, the goal of this study is to find the exact meaning of *Ḍaraba* in the phrase *idrebuhunna* in the verse 34 of Surah *An-Nisa*. Additionally, the paper tries to address these questions as well:

- What are the meanings of *Ḍaraba* in Arabic?
- What is the meaning of *Ḍaraba* in the Holy Qur'ān?
- What are the commentators and the Holy Qur'ān scholars take on the meaning of *idrebuhunna*?

## 2. Literature review

The meaning of *Ḍaraba* in the phrase *idrebuhunna* in the verse 34 of Surah *An-Nisa* has been discussed extensively in the commentary works and books of the Holy Qur'ān scholars and many postgraduate students have chosen it as a research topic. In their work, entitled “Structural Semantics of the Term *Ḍaraba* in the Holy Qur'ān”, Fattahizadeh et al. (2020) examined the semantic components of *Ḍaraba* based on substitutes and collocational relations using a structuralist approach. In another study entitled “Etymological Approach to the Qur'ānic Term *Ḍaraba*”, Fattahizadeh et al. (2021) traced the meanings of *Ḍaraba* in ancient Afro-Asian and ancient Semitic languages and examined its semantic evolution until today. They found that the meaning of the word “beat” in the phrase *idrebuhunna* is incompatible with the etymological studies of *Ḍaraba* in the Holy Qur'ān. They, in turn, suggested the meaning of turning over/going (Fattahizadeh et al., 2021). Further, Khazaei et al. (2021) in their study, “Criticism of the Translation and Interpretation of the Verse of Noshuz based on the Term *Ḍaraba*” showed that “beating” does not necessarily mean physical beating, but rather a form of dealing with rebellious women (Khazaei, et al., 2021).

What has made this study distinct from other studies is that its method is based on qualitative content analysis and linguistic approaches. Apart from this, this paper focuses on the meaning of *Ḍaraba* in the phrase *idrebuhunna*.

### 3. Methods

Drawing on structural semantics, different applications of the term *Ḍaraba* in the *Holy Qur'ān* were investigated (Crowley & Bowern, 2010). Using qualitative content analysis, the opinions of forty-two commentators of the Holy Qur'ān as well as scholars of the Holy Qur'ān about the meaning of polytheism were analyzed and categorized. In this method, three stages of open, axial and selective coding were taken (Yan Zhang & Barbara, 2005). This is followed by the criticism of the views, and the strongest view was chosen based on semantics.

### 4. *Ḍaraba* in Arabic

*Ḍaraba* is one of the words whose history goes back to Afro-Asian languages. In those languages, there are various meanings, such as to twist, to stick, to connect, to gather and pile up, to burn, to dry, to separate, to leave and to go (Fattahizadeh et al., 2021, p. 141). In the Arabic language, this word has various meanings, such as swimmer, like, light rain (Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, 1982, p. 33), handle, thin man or little milk (Ṣāhib ibn-i 'Abbād, 1994, p. 10), asking for sustenance or lingering (Wasti Zubeidi, 1988, p. 166). stinging, coining or mixing (Musa, 1989, vol. 1, p. 141), thick white honey or a male camel in the standing position (Shartouni, 1995, p. 298) speed in walking, freezing the plant, turning away, stopping and hindering, staying at home, change and evolution (Ibn Manzoor, n.d., p. 545).

While paying attention to the meanings of *Ḍaraba* in Afro-Asian languages, it should be noted that in terms of importance, semantic tracking in Afro-Asian languages is less important than in Arabic because semantic changes from the source language to the target language are natural. Therefore, the present article mainly focuses on the meanings of *Ḍaraba* in Arabic, which is the language of the Holy Qur'ān. Also, it has not been mentioned so far that when it comes to the meanings of *Ḍaraba* in the Arabic language, the noun meanings are less important than the verb meanings; therefore, more attention is paid to the verb meanings in this paper.

### 5. *Ḍaraba* in the Holy Qur'ān

The stem of *Ḍaraba* is found in the Holy Qur'ān with 25 derivations and 57 uses (in 27 the Meccan Surahs and 30 Medinite Surahs) (Rohani, 1987, p. 936). It is necessary to examine all the Qur'ānic uses of *Ḍaraba* in order to find the exact meaning of *Ḍaraba* in *idrebuhunna*. The results of the investigations based on the interpretations are reported in Table 1.

Table 1. The Qur'ānic uses of *Ḍaraba*

The meaning of <i>Ḍaraba</i>	The verse	Translation of the verse	The addresses of verses
turning away and ignoring	أَفَنَضْرِبُ عَنْكُمْ الذِّكْرَ صَفْحًا	Shall We keep back the Reminder from you and disregard you	Az-Zukhruf, 5
hitting the sea with a stick	أَنْ اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْبَحْرَ	Strike the sea with your staff	As-Shura, 63

The meaning of <i>Daraba</i>	The verse	Translation of the verse	The addresses of verses
pelting stones with a stick	فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْحَجَرَ		Al-Baqarah, 69; Al-A'raf, 160
by hitting the grass	وَخُذْ بِيَدِكَ ضِغْتًا فَاضْرِبْ بِهِ	[We told him:] 'Take a faggot in your hand and then strike [your wife] with it	Sad, 44
striking the face and back	يَضْرِبُونَ وُجُوهُهُمْ وَ أَذْبَارَهُمْ	striking their faces and their backs	Al- Anfal, 50; Muhammad, 27
covering their ears	فَضَرَبْنَا عَلَى آذَانِهِمْ	So We put them to sleep	Al-Kahf, 11
quarreling	مَا ضَرَبُوهُ لَكَ إِلَّا جِدْلًا	They cite him to you only for the sake of contention	Az-Zukhruf, 58
being humiliated	وَ ضَرَبْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ الذَّلَّةَ وَالْمَسْكِنَةَ	So they were struck with abasement and poverty	Al-Baqarah, 61; Al-Imran, 112
building a wall	فَضْرِبْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِسُورٍ لَهُ بَابٌ	Then there will be set up between them a wall with a gate	Al-Hadid, 13
road building	فَاضْرِبْ لَهُمْ طَرِيقًا فِي الْبَحْرِ يَبَسًا	and strike out for them a dry path through the sea	Ta-Ha, 77
beating	وَ اضْرِبُوهُنَّ	and [as the last resort] beat them	An-Nisa, 34
hitting the idol	فَرَاغَ عَلَيْهِمْ ضَرْبًا بِالْيَمِينِ	Then he attacked them, striking forcefully	Al-Saffat, 93
rubbing a piece of meat against another piece	فَقُلْنَا اضْرِبُوهُ بِبَعْضِهَا	We said, 'Strike him with a piece of it	Al-Baqarah, 73
beheading	فَاضْرِبُوا فَوْقَ الْأَعْنَاقِ	So strike their necks	Al-Anfal, 12; Muhammad, 4
cutting off a finger	وَ اضْرِبُوا مِنْهُمْ كُلَّ بَنَانٍ	strike their every limb joint	Al-Anfal, 12
proverb	وَ يَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ	Allah draws these parables for mankind	Ibrahim, 25
traveling	وَ إِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ	When you journey in the land	Al-Nisa, 101

The meaning of <i>Ḍaraba</i>	The verse	Translation of the verse	The addresses of verses
wearing a scarf	وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَى جُيُوبِهِنَّ	and let them draw their scarfs over their bosoms	Al-Nur, 31
stomping on the ground	وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ	And do not hit them with their feet	Al-Nur, 31

As can be seen in Table 1, *Ḍaraba* appears to have 19 meanings in the Holy Qur'ān. In other words, *Ḍaraba* with the meaning of “proverb” was repeated 30 times, while *Ḍaraba* with the meaning of “traveling” was repeated 7 times. Therefore, the two count as the most repeated meaning. The Qur'ānic uses of *Ḍaraba* show that it is combined with another noun in most cases. In such cases, its meaning has changed, and in a few cases, it is used in a singular form. Therefore, according to the words before and after *Ḍaraba*, three meanings can be understood for it: hitting/beating, a type of hitting and a meaning other than hitting. Table 2 shows these semantic changes.

Table 2. The meanings of *Ḍaraba* in the verses of the *Holy Qur'ān*

Verse/Verses	Frequency	Meanings
Al-Baqarah, 26/ Ar-Ra'd, 17/ Ibrahim, 24 & 25 & 45/ An-Nahl, 74 & 75 & 76 & 112/ Al-Isra, 48/ Al-Kahf, 32 & 45/	30	proverb
Al-Baqarah, 273/ Al-Imran, 156/ <i>An-Nisa</i> , 94 & 101/ Al-Maidah, 106/ Al-Muzzammil, 20	7	traveling
Al-Baqarah, 61/ Al-Imran, 112	3	being humiliated
Al-Baqarah, 60/ Al-Araf, 160	2	to stone with a stick
Al- Anfal, 50/ Muhammad, 27	2	striking in the face and back
Al-Anfal, 12	1	beheading
Al-Baqarah, 73	1	rubbing a piece of meat against another piece
Al-Hadid, 13	1	building a wall
Az-Zukhruf, 5	1	turning away and ignoring
Az-Zukhruf, 58	1	Quarreling
As-Shura, 63	1	hitting the sea with a stick
Sad, 44	1	by hitting the grass
Al-Saffat, 93	1	hitting the idol
Ta-Ha, 77	1	road building
Al-Kahf, 11	1	covering their ears
Al-Anfal, 12	1	cutting off a finger
<i>An-Nisa</i> , 34	1	beating
Al-Nur, 31	1	wearing a scarf
Al-Nur, 31	1	stomping on the ground

In many cases, *Ḍaraba* has been combined with another letter, resulting in a new meaning where it no longer means striking a body. *Ḍaraba anhu* (explaining) (Az-Zukhruf, 5), *Ḍaraba b...* (hitting with ...) (Shuara'a, 63), *Ḍaraba ala* (Curtain over listening) (Kahf, 11) and *Ḍaraba fi* (traveling) (Baqarah, 273) are among these cases.

## 6. Meanings of *Ḍaraba* in the phrase *idrebuhunna*

Following the various uses of *Ḍaraba* in the Holy *Qur'ān*, *Qur'ān* scholars have tried to determine the exact meaning of *Ḍaraba* in this verse based on the phrases before and after the word as well as internal and external context. In the following, the proposed meanings are reviewed.

### 6.1 Physical beating/hitting

In Arabic, the actual and primary meaning of *Ḍaraba* is the same as physical contact and hitting, and other meanings are either figurative or have a different meaning with a special preposition. (Ibn Fāris, 2001, p. 589). The most important and widely-recognized meaning of *Ḍaraba* in pre-Islamic and contemporary literature is physical hitting. Scholars opposing this meaning are of the view that *Ḍaraba* is not expressed as a physical beating in most dictionaries. They also believe that hitting is a secondary meaning for *Ḍaraba*, which has been barely mentioned in contemporary dictionaries. Therefore, *Ḍaraba* has evolved in terms of meaning over time (Shahrudi & Besharati, 2015, p. 2). Of course, it is clear that *Ḍaraba* has several meanings and determining the meaning of hitting requires analogy. For this reason, whenever the word *Ḍaraba* is used in the Holy *Qur'ān* with the meaning of beating, it is used by analogy (Qaini, 2013, p. 72); for example, in this verse *فَكَيْفَ إِذَا تَوَفَّتْهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَضْرِبُونَ وُجُوهَهُمْ وَأَنْبَارَهُمْ* (but how will it be [with them] when the angels take them away, striking their faces and their backs?) (Muhammad, 27) or in this verse *وَخَذْ بِيَدِكَ ضِغْتًا فَاضْرِبْ بِهِ وَلَا تَحْنُثْ* ([We told him:] 'Take a faggot in your hand and then strike [your wife] with it) (Sad, 44).

For Ibn Abbas *Ḍaraba* is a toothbrush or something similar; thus, it does not break a bone or cut flesh. Sa'id ibn Jubayr, 'Ikrima, Sha' bī, Qatada, Atta and Hasan al-Basri have interpreted *Ḍaraba* as something non-painful (Tabari, 1992, p. 70). Some of them also believed that *Ḍaraba* is a metaphor and does not mean hitting and physical punishment (Mousavi Bojnordi & Mirzaei, 2017, p. 21). Nevertheless, some have drawn an analogy between *Ḍaraba* and hitting as it can be in various forms (weak or strong) and tools. They are of the view that the weakest form of hitting has been mentioned in the Sharia (Galairi, 2003, p. 131).

### 6.2 Turning away

Some believe that *Ḍaraba* in this verse means avoiding and turning away. That is, if the wife misbehaves with her husband, he should first advise her, and if the preaching is ineffective, he should distance himself from her in bed. If distancing does not work here, he should turn away from his wife and get angry with her. To clarify their point, the scholars have referred to the phrase *فاضربه على الجدار* (Hit him against the wall). This phrase refers to someone who talks nonsense or whose writings are way beyond rational reasoning and logic. Indeed, "knock his words against the wall" is an irony for avoiding and ignoring illogical words or contentless writings. In this verse, anger is referred to ironically. It seems that the Holy *Qur'ān* advises that the rebellious wife can be punished through three steps; if the first two steps (preaching and leaving the bed) turned out to be ineffective, the husband can avoid

her and turn away from her. The husband is recommended to be patient and counter-extremism so he can come up with an effective solution. He can convince the woman to stop being stubborn and reflect on her conduct, and her interests should be taken into account (Mousavi Lari, 2011, p. 50; Abu Suleiman, 2001, p. 80). This view has been seriously opposed by some commentators. Their first reason is that the Holy Qur'ān has used the word *iarad* (اعراض) to convey the meaning of turning away and turning around. In particular, the *Holy Qur'ān* uses the same word to order the woman to turn away from her man:

وَإِنِ امْرَأَةٌ خَافَتْ مِنْ بَعْلِهَا نُشُوزًا أَوْ إِعْرَاضًا

(If a woman is afraid of her husband's ill treatment and desertion (Al-Nisa', 128)).

Therefore, the word *iarad* (اعراض) could have been mentioned in this verse. There is also a difference between turning away and misconduct. Turning away from the wife (اعراض) is when the husband no longer wants to live with his wife. Misconduct (نشوز), however, refers to the situation where the wife is reluctant to fulfill her husband's duties. Although the husband's reluctance in establishing a relationship with his wife is an example of misbehavior, the determination of whether this is an example of a turning away or misconduct depends on the context of this behavior. In Sharia terminology, when a husband is disobeyed, it means that he no longer fulfills the rights of his wife. He turns away from her just to express his abhorrence of the woman's behavior (Shakri Golpayegani et al., 2014, p. 5).

Their second reason is that the word *Ḍaraba* will have the meaning of *iarad* (اعراض), when it is combined with the word *`An* (عن): *aḍraba anhu* means *`araḍa anhu* (Ibn Manzoor, Nd, p. 547). While these prepositions are not mentioned in the mentioned verse (Pour Moula & Jalali, 2015, p. 57).

The third reason is that *Ḍaraba* means turning away when it is in the form of *efa`l* (إفعال), even though it is not used in the mentioned verse in the form of *efa`l*. Of course, some scholars do not support the third reason. This is because they believed that *Ḍaraba* with the meaning of *eḍra`b*, comes in the form of *Ḍaraba* and *eḍra`b*. That is, both the *Ḍaraba* and *eḍra`b* mean turning away (Al-Toraihi, n.d., p. 105). Since the word *a`n* (عن) is not mentioned in this verse, *Ḍaraba* does not mean turning away. In the *Holy Qur'ān* it has been mentioned without the word *a`n*. In one case where the word *a`n* is added, the word *Ḍaraba* is used with the meaning of turning away in the *Holy Qur'ān*:

أَفَنَضْرِبُ عَنْكُمْ الذِّكْرَ صَفْحًا

(Shall We keep back the reminder from you and disregard you (Az-Zukhruf, 5))  
(Ansari, 2010, p. 35).

### 6.3 Hit without pressure

Drawing on other verses of the *Holy Qur'ān*, other commentators believe that *Ḍaraba* with meaning of hitting does not contain "pressure". This is because in some verses of the *Holy Qur'ān*, which contain the word *Ḍaraba*, they only refer to the meaning of hitting and the meaning of pressure is not noticeable.

فَضْرَبْنَا عَلَىٰ آذَانِهِمْ

(So We put them to sleep (Al-Kahf, 11))

وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ

(and let them draw their scarfs over their bosoms (Al-Nur, 31)) (Javadi Amoli, 2004, p. 313).

Therefore, the meaning of *Daraba* in *idrebuhunna* is hitting without pressure. However, this should be noted that in the above-mentioned verses, *Daraba* is not used in the sense of hitting. Hitting the ears is a metaphor for blocking, that is, we blocked their hearing (Tabarsi, 1993, p. 698; Ibn Jozi, 2001, p. 69). *Ḍarba Khamr* (ضرب خمر) on the bosoms means putting a covering on the bosom (Ibn Abi Hatem, 1998, Vol. 8, p. 2576; Tabari, 1992, p. 94).

#### 6.4 Traveling

Another meaning of *Daraba* is to travel but also Jihad in the way of God. Here, the preposition *في* has been used. To give an example:

وَإِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ

(When you journey in the land, there is no sin upon you (Nisa', 101)).

I

n this verse, the phrase *Daraba fi al-arz* (ضرب في الارض) means to travel. In the same sense, some commentators have mentioned “leaving their homes for jihad” as one of the meanings of *Daraba fi Sabillellah*. For example,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا ضَرَبْتُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَتَبَيَّنُوا

(O you who have faith! When you issue forth in the way of Allah, try to ascertain) (Nisa', 94)).

Due to the fact that the preposition *في* and the word *Al-Ard* (الارض) or *sabil* (سبيل) cannot be seen in this verse, the meaning of “a man traveling” is ruled out.

#### 6.5 To caress

Some researchers believe that hitting in this verse means “caress” (Qaeni, 2013, p. 72). Nonetheless, this view is not consistent with the last part of the verse because it is mentioned:

فَإِنْ أَطَعْتُمْ كُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِمْ سَبِيلًا

(Then if they obey you, do not seek any course [of action] against them (Surah An-Nisa, 34)).

It is clear that “caressing” is not a form of oppression of women because God commanded the husband not to hurt her (Mosavi Rokni & Dehqan Manshadi, 2008, p. 192).

#### 6.6 Light beating

This verse used *Daraba* rather than *darraba*. Because *darraba* means hitting repeatedly and hard. In fact, the verse uses a word with a mild connotation; therefore, “beating” in this verse has a mild connotation (*Daraba*). The verse should be interpreted in such a way that it prohibits uncontrolled violence against women. Therefore, the phrase *idrebuhunna* does not mean the permissibility of *Daraba* rather it is indicative of the fact that the Holy Qur'an does not allow Muslims to harm or 'beat' their wives (Hedaytzadeh & Soheila Pirouzfard, 2021, p. 425). In addition to this, some commentators have interpreted this as mild corporal punishment, which aims to treat women's mental illness or masochism (Makaram Shirazi,

1995, p. 374). Although in Arabic, *darraba* is used for hitting hard, this is not the reason that *Daraba* is used for hitting lightly. In many cases, Arabic speakers use *Daraba* for violent physical beating. If a light beating is intended, it is conveyed to the listener or reader by using context and other words.

### 6.7 Verbal abuse (beating)

Some Qur'ānic scholars have expanded the meaning of hitting from physical abuse to verbal abuse. As a result of this semantic development, the importance of verbal abuse of women is highlighted more than ever. Therefore, two forms of hitting can be named here, namely, physical abuse and verbal abuse. Hitting is not limited to physical hitting as verbal hitting is far more effective. Therefore, the phrase *idrebuhunna* refers to the fact that a woman can return to her normal life and fulfill the obligations of the marriage if she is encouraged through a friendly conversation or is strongly advised to do so or is reminded of the dangers of heedlessness of the Hereafter (Shafii Mazandarani, 2013, p. 81). It is clear that this view is a narrow interpretation because there is no background for it in the *Holy Qur'ān* and Arabic.

### 6.8 To separate

Sultan Ahmadi and others believe that *Daraba* in this verse means breaking the relationship because *Daraba* basically means to separate and cut off. *Daraba* in the phrase *idrebuhunna* means breaking the relationship. The *Holy Qur'ān* states cut off all their fingers in this verse:

وَاضْرِبُوا مِنْهُمْ كُلَّ بَنَانٍ

(strike their every each finger (Al-Anfal, 12)).

*Daraba* in this verse means “to separate and cut off”. This meaning is also correct in the verse of *Nushuz*. *Idrebuhunna* means to keep them away from you and separate them. Of course, a man does not have the right to force the woman to leave the marital residence, and the woman can decide not to leave the house. Therefore, here, separating can happen if only the man leaves the marital residence for some time. This makes the woman feel the absence of her husband and comes to appreciate her marital life. This form of anger is more intense and more effective, compared to the situation wherein he leaves her alone in bed. Therefore, *idrebuhunna* means punishing by cutting off alimony or breaking off a relationship and leaving home with anger. Therefore, if a man sees incompatibility in his marital life, he should first try to solve the problem by advising the wife or listening to her. If these techniques turned out to be ineffective, he can get angry with her at home. In the second step, he must leave home by breaking off the relationship so as to punish her. If this did not work, the final solution is divorce (Sultan Ahmadi et al., 2017, p. 65). In supporting this view, some have said that in the second stage, violence happens at home and the husband rejects the wife there, and in the third stage, violence happens outside the house as the man leaves the house husband (Abusaliman, 2001, p. 38). In rejecting this point of view, it should be said that when a man is no longer at home, the woman may not feel to change her rebellious behavior, and too much freedom makes her unwilling to change her rebellious behavior.

### 6.9 Emotional beating

For some commentators, the beating in the verse does not tend to be physical as the context of the verse implies emotional beating/hitting. They believe that based on the tradition, hitting/beating mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān should not be interpreted literally.

In this case, beating is not considered physical punishment, but a kind of psychological pressure that is compatible and applicable to the fear of disobedience of the woman (Sadr, pp. 92-100).

Also, some have interpreted *Daraba* as treating a quarrelsome wife harshly so that she may be under mental pressure to change her behavior. In order to validate their view, they rely on the saying of the Holy Prophet (may God bless him and grant him peace) as he does not justify cruelty to women, and making women starve or buying them no cloths are taken as forms of beating. Therefore, *Daraba* in this verse is similar to the view of Ata (d.114 ah.) who said, "Don't hit women, but be angry with them" (Ibn Arabi, 1422, p. 415), which suggests that one needs to deal with a disobedient woman angrily rather than beat her physically (Khaza'I et al., p. 269).

### 6.10 Having intercourse

Sheikh al-Islami refers to the literal meaning of *Daraba*, *yaḍrebo*, *ḍaraban*, which means the intercourse between male and female camels. He has interpreted *idrebuhunna* as the man proposing intercourse to his wife. He believes that God wants men to feel scared when they observe that their wives are not willing to have intercourse. They are advised not to ignore this matter and openly talk to their wives concerning this matter. If this turned out to be ineffective, they can avoid sleeping with them in the same bed for a short time. This encourages the women to reflect on their behavior while being left alone (Sheikh al-Islami, 2017, p. 88).

### 6.11 Mental beating

In order to obtain the exact meaning of *idrebuhunna*, one must first pay attention to the meanings of *Daraba* in the Arabic literature as well as its Qur'ānic uses but also the rituals of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). Then one should take into consideration the three levels and the context of the verse and surah and all the applications related to married life. Having examined all these aspects, one can explore its meaning. The verses related to marital life in the *Holy Qur'ān* begin with marriage. When the marriage leads to a compatible relationship between the husband and wife, it keeps the marital life more successful and stronger. However, if it does not lead to compatibility in the relationship, marital schism will be the result, which is the open dissatisfaction of a couple with each other. If one of the partners turns out to be dissatisfied, this man or woman is called disobedient (*nushūz*). Three approaches of admonishing, striking or correcting can be taken to solve this problem (see Figure 1).

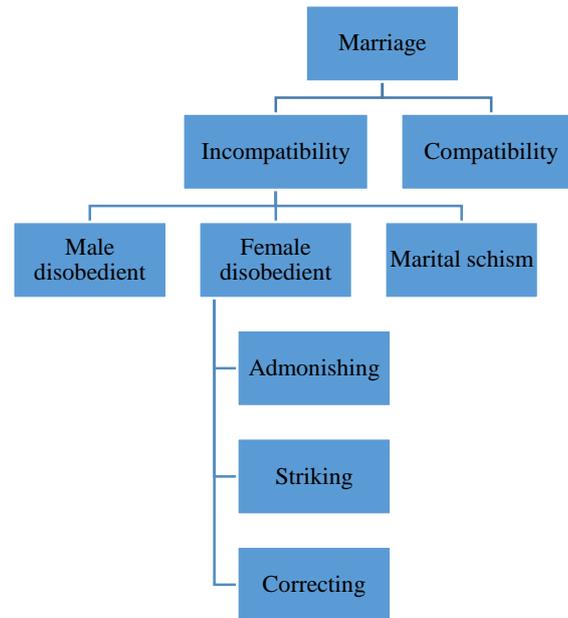


Figure 1. The verses related to married life in the *Holy Qur'an*

Throughout the *Holy Qur'an* and especially in Surah An-Nisa, the emotional dimensions of women are highlighted (*An-Nisa*, 15, 19 & 129). Before the verse 25 and after the verse 35 in Surah An-Nisa, the emotional aspects of women are mentioned. In verse 34 of Surah *An-Nisa* before the three actions (admonishing them, leaving them alone and beating them), we read

فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ

(Righteous women are obedient and watchful in the absence [of their husbands] (*An-Nisa*, 34)).

and after the three actions, God has said

فَإِنْ أَطَعْتَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا

(Then if they obey you, do not seek any course [of action] against them (*An-Nisa*, 34)).

Overall, the emotional aspects of women have been taken into consideration. In two of the actions (advise them, and [if ineffective] keep away from them in the bed, and [as the last resort] beat them) (*An-Nisa*, 34), one can see how affection is playing a role in educating women. In such an emotional atmosphere, considering the two previous actions and the context of the verse, along with other verses of *Surah An-Nisa*, the meaning of *idrebhunna* should also be emotional in order to maintain the harmony, consistency and internal connection of the verse. On the other hand, the purpose of these three actions is to prevent women from becoming rebellious, and consequently, hitting or beating can have adverse effects and stir women to become more disobedient and rebellious.

From the examination of the verses of the Holy Qur'an, it is concluded that how harsh or light the hitting/beating should depend on their psychological impacts (Ahmadzadeh, 2018, pp. 23-26). Therefore, if the hitting/beating is absolutely harsh, it will have absolute adverse effects on the women. In contrast, if the hitting/beating is quite light, its positive impact on

the woman will be high. It is obvious that the one who does hitting/beating must be physically strong, yet, he has emotions. The person who is hit/beaten also has a body and emotions. It is crystal clear that when someone is hit/beaten, they are both emotionally and physically impacted. Thus, when the hitting/beating is harsh, it shows the emotional bond between the two is not strong. When beating/hitting is not severe, this means that the emotional bond between the two is strong. The simultaneous presence of violence and tenderness in hitting/beating is indicative of various levels of intensity of hitting.

According to the fuzzy logic, the phrase *idrebuhunna* in this verse is placed in the lowest state of *Daraba* and the highest emotional state. Considering that the context of the verse is related to solutions to prevent divorce, hitting cannot be the true meaning. Also, hitting is not an emotional activity and has brought a great deal of hatred on the part of the women. Also, all three actions mentioned in the verse are aimed at helping the woman to modify her disruptive behavior. Therefore, it is mainly concerned with the psychological aspects. Therefore, hitting/beating should have psychological impacts as do “admonishing the women” and “leaving the women alone in bed”. Therefore, hitting/beating can be interpreted as a psychological matter than physical, which is in line with the true intention of the verse and the other two actions mentioned there. This interpretation can also be understood from the preceding and following verses.

Overall, the meaning of hitting in this verse is something mental, which stimulates the woman’s feelings and emotions. This can be realized by scaring and threatening her to beat. If the man shows his aggressive mood and sets the ground for hitting, she will feel scared and threatened. This is a form of hitting/beating albeit not physical. Maybe this type of hitting is more effective than hitting someone physically

Therefore, the physical impact of hitting/beating is virtually zero and its emotional effects are almost high.

Although someone might say that this form of hitting/beating leads to hatred on part of the woman and prepares the ground for the divorce, this form of hitting/beating leads to any physical beating; therefore,

Of course, if someone complains and says that this type of beating also increases hatred in a woman and prepares her to enter the threshold of divorce, the answer can be said that since the man does not take any physical action and Physical beating does not happen, it is indicative of man’s sincere feelings of love for his wife. Generally speaking, when we do not mean the physical form of hitting, it means that the emotional form is in the spotlight and that the physical form is not intended. Also, a woman who sees her husband’s power, who is capable of anything, will be proud of her man’s masculinity and it creates a warm family atmosphere.

All in all, given the words used in this verse and the verses following and preceding it and the Qur’ān’s emphasis on love and affection between husband and wife, well-established traditions, the cultural and social environment of the contemporary world and that *Qur’ānic* teachings emphasize all human beings are unconditionally equal in dignity, hitting does not mean physical abuse and harassment. The mild form of hitting (i.e., threatening the woman a little) refers to the highest emotional and psychological state between two people, husband and wife, and it is based on a matrix of fuzzy logic. Based on this, various forms and levels of hitting/beating can be formed, as shown in Figure 2.

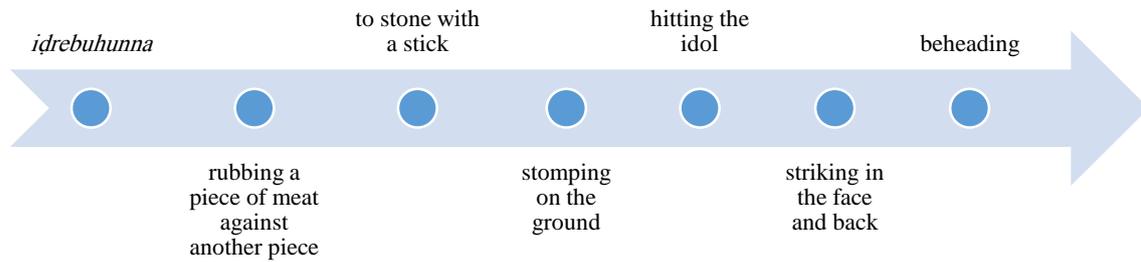


Figure 2. Different levels of hitting/beating in the *Holy Qur’ān* based on the fuzzy logic

Now, if hitting physically is placed in one row and hitting psychologically is placed in another row, the fuzzy matrix of hitting is formed, as seen in Figure 3.



Figure 3. The fuzzy matrix of hitting based on Ahmadzadeh and Zahiri (2018, p. 25)

In Figure 3, physical hitting/beating has a state of intensity and weakness and is a fuzzy concept. Also, mental beating has a state of intensity and weakness and is a fuzzy concept, and when these two states are combined in one action, a fuzzy matrix is created. This matrix can be developed further based on the type of the audience and person who is hit/beaten, the individual or social state of hitting, and hitting between two objects or two people or a combination of objects and humans and positive and negative mental states. Therefore, the resulting matrix is a triangular (width, length, height) with a square and cube matrix.

### 7. Coding the meaning of *Daraba*

After collecting and examining commentators’, *Qur’ān* scholars and lexicologists’ perspectives about the meaning of *Daraba* in the phrase *idrebuhunna*, they were coded in three steps as can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Coding the meaning of *Ḍaraba*

Categories	Concepts	Codes
emotional contact	to separate	breaking off the relationship/cutting off/ leaving the house by husband/ anger/ ignoring
	to turn away	avoiding/being angry/turning away from the wife/aḍraba anhu means `araḍa anhu/temporary anger/having a wrathful contact with disobedient women
	to caress	kindness/caress
	verbal beating	threatening advice
	emotional beating	beating that leads to mental disorders in women or puts a woman under mental pressure
	traveling	traveling
	mental beating	setting the ground for hitting/beating
physical contact	physical beating	physical beating/controlled violence
	hit without pressure	hitting without pressure
	light beating	Hitting without leaving any bruises
not hitting	having coitus	the sexual act of a male camel with a female camel

## 8. Conclusion

In the verse 34 of Surah *An-Nisa*, next to the verb *idrebuhunna*, there is no other noun, letter or phrase. When combined with another letter or word, *Ḍaraba* can have numerous meanings, such as proverb, being humiliated, rubbing a piece of meat against another piece, pelting stones with a stick, covering the head, traveling, building a wall, hitting the idol and road building. All these meanings do not seem to fit the context of this verse. Additionally, since this verse is also mentioned in spoken language, other meanings for *Ḍaraba*, such as thin man, light rain, thick white, etc. do not seem to fit the context of this verse.

Most meanings of *Ḍaraba* used in the *Holy Qur'ān* do not seem to fit the context of this verse due to lexical and morphological reasons. Due to the same reasons, we cannot accept the common meanings of the word in Arabic. Only a couple of meanings are deemed appropriate and correct, including separating, turning away, hitting physically and having intercourse. In fact, the meaning of *idrebuhunna* is unique in the above four meanings, which merits further investigation.

Empirical studies of *Ḍaraba* in the *Holy Qur'ān* show that *Ḍaraba* with physical beating has multiple forms and can include both mild and severe beating. The beating can be done with or without (various) tools. To give some examples, it has been mentioned in one verse that grass can be used for beating; however, in other situations, a cane or sword is used for hitting the neck and fingers. Another verse mentions that angels hit the face and back or in another verse, we read that the idols are hit hard even though there is no mention of tools for hitting the idols. However, when a meaning is considered for *idrebuhunna*, its degrees should also be taken into consideration. In fact, *idrebuhunna* is the third step when dealing with a disobedient woman.

Of the meanings mentioned earlier, the meaning of hitting the body is more precise, yet, there is no consensus concerning the form of hitting. For some, it is not hitting someone hard. Among the mentioned meanings, the meaning of hitting/beating a body is certain. Despite this, views concerning the form of beating/hitting vary. For many commentators, it refers to beating someone not harshly and severely. Based on the psychological dimensions of beating the woman in the verse and the emotional needs of women, if the husband is in an aggressive mode and is ready to hit, this instills fear in the wife. This is also a form of hitting/beating, which is mental than physical. This is perhaps because this form of hitting is more effective than physical hitting and can considerably change a woman's behavior. Through this, the emotional impact of hitting/beating will be more enormous, compared to the physical impact.

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