

Wife beating in Islam? The Quran strikes back!

The domain name of this website refers to The Quran: chapter 4, verse 34. It is considered by some to be the most controversial verse of this book as it has been traditionally interpreted to allow wife beating by the husband. There has been much discussion of this verse, criticism as well as justification, in online forums, articles, books, magazines, TV, online videos etc. More recently, disputes have arisen amongst those classifying themselves as *muslims* with regard to the correct meaning of this verse, with some translations of The Quran now opting for a different understanding. The aim of this study will be: to review all relevant occurrences, accurately translate and analyse verse 4:34, then review the evidence both FOR and AGAINST this verse allowing a husband to beat/strike his wife, with a summary and conclusion at the end. This unique approach was chosen because with so much information (and misinformation) about this verse it has become very difficult and/or time consuming to get an accurate understanding of this issue.

The word in question in 4:34 is "*idriboo*" / أَضْرِبُوا for which the Arabic root is Dad-Ra-Ba (ض ر ب).

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Part 1

Review of all occurrences of Dad-Ra-Ba in The Quran

The 1st verb form (DaRaBa) derived from this root has many different meanings, in fact, it is possibly one of the most diversely used words in the Arabic language. This is primarily because it is often used figuratively as an expression meaning something different to the literal meaning of the phrase. It is estimated that about 100 meanings in all have been given for this form in Classical Arabic dictionaries. It is also recorded in these sources that specific meanings are associated with certain prepositions or subjects, and whilst these are not rigid laws, they can be seen as patterns of common usage. The Quran itself uses this word in different ways as we will now analyse below (they are numbered only for easier reference):

1)

DRB fee al ard = *journey in the land/earth*

[2:273, 3:156, 4:101, 5:106, 73:20]

Some translators use "go out", "move about".

2)

DRB fee sabeeli Allahi = *journey in God's way/path*

[4:94]

This is taken literally and non-literally by translators.

3)

DRB + mathal = *propound/cite an example/similitude/parable*

[2:26, 13:17, 14:24, 14:25, 14:45, 16:74, 16:75, 16:76, 16:112, 17:48, 18:32, 18:45, 22:73, 24:35, 25:9, 25:39, 29:43, 30:28, 30:58, 36:13, 36:78, 39:27, 39:29,

43:17, 43:57, 43:58, 47:3, 59:21, 66:10, 66:11]

With regard to the translation of DRB in the above verses there is variation, depending on translator, e.g. some use variations in 17:48, 25:9, 43:58, 43:17.

4)

kathalika *yadribu* Allahu al haqqa wa al batila = *in this way God propounds/cites the truth and the falsehood*

[13:17]

For this verse some use "collides", "puts/shows forth" (e.g. Ibn Kathir), "points out" (e.g. Al Jalalayn).

5)

Fa *darabna* AAala *athanihim* fee al kahfi sineena AAadadan = *So We sealed/covered on/over their ears in the cave some years*

[18:11]

The verse is literally saying the effect of "DRB on/over their ears in the cave" lasted several years. This seems to suggest God kept them isolated in the cave, when they were hiding out, thus cut off from the outside world. Mustansir Mir in "Verbal Idioms of The Qur'an" says it is an idiom meaning to prevent someone from hearing something, sealing off, or put to sleep. The only other related example in which DRB with something is done on/over something else is 24:31, when covers are *cast* over chests.

6)

Walaw tara ith yatawaffa allatheena kafaroo almala-ikatu *yadriboona* wujoohahum wa adbarahum wa thooqoo AAathaba al hareeqi

= *And if you could but see when the angels/controllers* are taking* (unto themselves, i.e. at death) *those who reject striking their faces/fronts and backs and* (say) *"taste the penalty of the fire."*

[8:50]

Fakayfa *itha* tawaffathumu almalaikatu *yadriboona* wujoohahum wa adbarahum

= *So/then how* (will it be) *when the angels/controllers* take them* (unto themselves, i.e. in death) *striking their faces/fronts and their backs?*

[47:27]

*angels is better translated as controllers, i.e. forces in control of certain functions/laws. There are some controllers we know about, e.g. those found in nature: $F=ma$, $E=mc^2$ etc. and some we do not know about.

In the above two verses, translators commonly use "beat / strike / smite", and whilst this may seem acceptable on the surface this translation does have significant problems when examined more closely:

- In 8:50 it says if only you could see, thus clearly implying that what the controllers are doing cannot be seen. And since it is at the time of death, then the controllers cannot be striking the physical fronts/faces and backs as this would be observable. It could be suggested that at death, this is a special/unique transition phase so perhaps the controllers are indeed beating/striking but in a different form somehow, and the living simply cannot see it.
- It causes problems with verses such as 7:37, 16:28, 8:51, 6:93-94 in which the controllers are in communication with people being taken at death, and the ones taken are listening properly and answering, but this is highly unlikely if they are

being beaten at the same time!

- It causes a clear problem with 6:93 when it describes the controllers as stretching/extending forth or opening their hands/powers when taking them at death saying "Bring out your souls...". This sounds unlike striking/beating, and there is no implication of this in the verse at all.
- If this is indeed a beating/striking causing pain in some way, then this would be the only example in The Quran of an explicit punishment between death and the 'day of obligation/judgement/requital/due'.
- In contrast, the controllers take those who are good with a greeting of peace/*salam* in 16:32 and there is no mention of taking them gently for example.

Thus, is there possibly a more suitable translation? Whatever the controllers are doing it is to their "fronts and backs" and this creates an imagery of a complete surrounding, coming at them from all directions, i.e. there is no escape. This imagery is similar to 6:93 mentioned above. Further, see 6:61 and 21:39. The only other occurrence of the exact same form "yadriboona" is in 73:20 in which it means journey or go/move about. Thus, taking the evidence into account, the Classical Arabic meanings of DRB and its usage in The Quran, it could be translated as the controllers set/march on or put forth or go/move about their fronts and backs, i.e. come at them from all directions. Even the English translation of "strike" has similar imagery to this, but "beat" does not. That is not to say it cannot mean "beat", it theoretically could, but it is not a particularly sound translation when cross-referenced.

As a side note, in M. Asad's notes, he says the early commentator Razi saw this phrase as an allegory: "They have utter darkness behind them and utter darkness before them", suggesting he did not agree with the commonly stated understanding of beating/striking literally.

7)

wal *yadribna* bi khumurihinna AAala juyoobihinna = [and let them draw/cast with their covers over/on their chests](#)

[24:31]

8)

wala *yadribna* bi-arjulihinna = [and let them not strike/stamp/move with their feet](#)

[24:31]

M. Asad translates it as "swing their legs", and in his notes says: The phrase *yadribna bi-arjulihinna* is idiomatically similar to the phrase *daraba bi-yadayhi fi mishyatih*, "he swung his arms in walking" (quoted in this context in Taj al-'Arus), and alludes to a deliberately provocative gait.

This expression seems to effectively imply any movement of the feet that would result in revealing beauty that is meant to be hidden is not allowed (see the full verse of 24:31). It may be interesting to note that to restrict its meaning to strike/stamp would still allow hidden beauty to be revealed by other types of feet movement, thus one could argue for a simpler translation such as: move about, put/cast forth, propound, set. See 38:42 as a comparison, which more clearly implies a literal usage of the feet.

9)

Afanadribu AAankumu al ththikra = [Should We withdraw from you the reminder](#)

[43:5]

Some use "turn/keep away", "disregard", "move" and even "should We omit reminding you" (e.g. Mustansir Mir, "Verbal Idioms of The Qur'an"). Simply, "put forth" can also be used, and it may be interesting to note that "*AAan kumu / from you*" was used, possibly to show instead of 'to put/show forth from one place/person to another

place/person' (i.e. the default action of DRB) the process is actually reversed, i.e. taken away from one place/persons.

10)

fa *duriba* baynahum bi soorin = *then put forth between them with a wall*
[57:13]

Some use "set-up", "separated", "placed". However, "*duriba*" is in the passive form, meaning: the subject is being acted upon, i.e. the wall receives the action expressed in the verb, thus the translation of "separated" is inappropriate here.

11)

fa *idrib* lahum tareeqan fee al bahri yabasan = *then indicate for them a dry path in the sea*
[20:77]

Some use "show", "strike", "assign" (e.g. Lane), "choose" (e.g. Tabari). It is important to note that Moses was given the above instruction even before setting off in his journey, and when he reaches the sea he doesn't automatically know what to do and awaits guidance from God and receives it by way of inspiration (see 26:61-63). If we couple this information with the fact that Moses did not literally strike a dry path, it shows that it is highly unlikely DRB in this instance had a meaning of "strike", hence perhaps many translators not translating it as such.

12)

idrib bi AAasaka al bahra fa infalaqa = *strike with your staff the sea, then it split/separated*
[26:63]

idrib bi AAasaka al hajara fa infajarat min hu = *strike with your staff the rock, then vented from it* (twelve springs)
[2:60]

idrib bi AAasaka al hajara fa inbajarat min hu = *strike with your staff the rock, then gushed from it* (twelve springs)
[7:160]

It is likely that in the above case, the rock cracked or breached, see 2:74 "...from them are those that split/breach so that water comes forth...". It is possible in these verses that a meaning of "put forth" or "point out" could be used.

13)

idriboohu bi baAAadiha = *cite /point out him with some of it* (the murder)
[2:73]

The above is commonly translated as "strike him (the murdered person) with part of it (the heifer/cow)" taken from the previous verses. The traditional commentators say this act brought the murdered person back to life and he identified his murderers in this case. However, this understanding becomes extremely weak when all the evidence is taken into account, which we will now analyse, beginning with an accurate translation according to the Arabic:

M=masculine
F=feminine
P=plural
S=singular

And when you (M,P) killed a soul (F,S), then you (M,P) accused each other in it (F,S), and God shall bring out what you (M,P) were hiding/concealing. [2:72]

So We said: "idriboo him (M,S) with some of it (F,S)." Like this God revives the dead (P) and He makes you realise His signs/revelations, maybe you reason/comprehend. [2:73]

Please read M.Asad's notes on the above:

Muhammad Asad - End Note 57 (2:73)

The phrase *idribuhu bi-ba'diha* can be literally translated as "strike him [or "it"] with something of her [or "it"]" -and this possibility has given rise to the fanciful assertion by many commentators that the children of Israel were commanded to strike the corpse of the murdered man with some of the flesh of the sacrificed cow, whereupon he was miraculously restored to life and pointed out his murderer! Neither the Qur'an, nor any saying of the Prophet, nor even the Bible offers the slightest warrant for this highly imaginative explanation, which must, therefore, be rejected-quite apart from the fact that the pronoun *hu* in *idribuhu* has a masculine gender, while the noun *nafs* (here translated as "human being") is feminine in gender: from which it follows that the imperative *idribuhu* cannot possibly refer to *nafs*. On the other hand, the verb *daraba* (lit., "he struck") is very often used in a figurative or metonymic sense, as, for instance, in the expression *daraba fi 'l-ard* ("he journeyed on earth"), or *daraba 'sh-shay' bi'sh-shay'* ("he mixed one thing with another thing"), or *daraba mathal* ("he coined a similitude" or "propounded a parable" or "gave an illustration"), or *'ala darb wahid* ("similarly applied" or "in the same manner"), or *duribat 'alayhim adh-dhillah* ("humiliation was imposed on them" or "applied to them"), and so forth. Taking all this into account, I am of the opinion that the imperative *idribuhu* occurring in the above Qur'anic passage must be translated as "apply it" or "this" (referring, in this context, to the principle of communal responsibility). As for the feminine pronoun *ha* in *ba'diha* ("some of it"), it must necessarily relate to the nearest preceding feminine noun-that is, to the *nafs* that has been murdered, or the act of murder itself about which (*fiha*) the community disagreed. Thus, the phrase *idribuhu bi-ba'diha* may be suitably rendered as "apply this [principle] to some of those [cases of unresolved murder]": for it is obvious that the principle of communal responsibility for murder by a person or persons unknown can be applied only to some and not to all such cases.

Muhammad Asad - End Note 58 (2:73)

Lit., "God gives life to the dead and shows you His messages" (i.e., He shows His will by means of such messages or ordinances). The figurative expression "He gives life to the dead" denotes the saving of lives, and is analogous to that in 5:32. In this context it refers to the prevention of bloodshed and the killing of innocent persons (Manar I, 351), be it through individual acts of revenge, or in result of an erroneous judicial process based on no more than vague suspicion and possibly misleading circumstantial evidence.

Additional notes:

Three or more people (i.e. masculine plural) killed the soul/person.

Three or more people (i.e. masculine plural) were concealing (i.e. it was them who did it, as confirmed by the start of 2:72).

The part in **red** cannot refer to showing them how God resurrects the dead to simply show God can do it, as suggested by some commentators, as this is nowhere in context, would not require a murdered person, and would go against the example of Abraham, see 2:260. Not to mention that this would be a strange way for God to go about it, as it involved using partners to do the task.

"the dead" (*al mawta*) is plural thus weakening the common/traditional interpretation further, as it is not in this manner God revives the dead elsewhere in The Quran.

The part in **blue** must fulfil the goal: God will bring out what they were concealing - further compounded by linking use of "*fa/so*" between 2:72 and 2:73.

The expression "God revives the dead" may also mean God revives the spiritually dead, i.e. them who were in the wrong (see the clear examples of 6:122, 27:80, 30:50-52, 8:24), thus, this seems the most likely interpretation in my opinion. Although, M.Asad's is also possible.

The previous stories in this chapter are separated by "*ith* / when / *إِذْ*", and are all self-contained lessons. The story of the cow is independent of the story before it and the one following it: that of the murdered soul.

The only masculine in the context [2:72-73] are those who committed the murder and thereafter accused each other, hiding the truth. The only feminine in the context is the murdered soul, and the act of murder in which they accused each other in (i.e. this is the closest preceding feminine to *ببعضها* / *bibadiha*).

Thus, applying the most likely option, we have: "*idriboo* him (i.e. each one accused) with some of it (the murder)".

All we need now is to consider "*idriboo*" to see if there is a meaning that fits. Lane's Lexicon states that DRB on its own can mean "to point or make a sign", i.e. point out or indicate. When we re-read the context of 2:72-73, it becomes obvious the perpetrators were accusing each other (i.e. pointing the finger at each other, so to speak) to conceal the truth that they did it, so God was to bring forth what they were concealing: so We said "point out him with some of it (the murder)". The only ones doing the pointing/accusing were the guilty. Thus, whomever of them (i.e. of the ones accused) was pointed out by the others also accused was assigned some part/responsibility of the murder. In this way, they could not escape what they had done, and indeed, God exposed them and brought out what they were concealing. The end result was that they took collective responsibility, each of him a part. Sharing of a sin/crime if a group were responsible is mentioned elsewhere in The Quran, e.g. 24:11.

Further, other Classical Arabic meanings of DRB can also be used, such as: cite, propound, indicate, assign, put/show forth.

Interestingly, in the tafsir of "al-Jalalayn" (see altafsir.com) it says the revived murdered soul *pointed out* his murderers. Ironically, this comes close to the truth; possibly indicating a remnant of the true understanding of this verse still remained, and likely became superficial/superstitious over time.

As a side note, for an understanding of "*ddaara'atum*", see Lane's Lexicon. In it, it specifically states the translation we have used. By deduction, we can work out it does indeed mean "you accused each other". The whole phrase literally means "you averted/repelled/pushed away each other". What are they averting/repelling/pushing away? The Quran tells us, it is "*feeha* = in it". Thus, the only possibility is they are literally pushing away in the dead body (highly unlikely), OR, they are pushing away in the murder, and logically, the latter can only mean they were pushing away the accusation or the sole responsibility for it. This is further proven by what follows, when it says they were concealing/hiding. Thus, one simply needs to ask: what can they (the ones who did it) possibly be concealing by repelling each other in the murder? The translation option then becomes obvious.

To conclude, the understanding presented here fits the grammar, the Arabic, Classical Arabic meanings, logic, cross-referencing the subject of murder, specifically, that there is life in *al qisas*/equivalence (the law of just recompense) for those who use their intellect, 2:179, and provides us with a self-contained explanation.

14)

Wa khuth bi yadika dighthan fa *idribbihi* walā tahnath = [And take with your hand a](#)

bundle, then *strike* with it, and do not break your oath
[38:44]

According to traditional interpretations 38:44 was a symbolic strike by Job/Ayyub (upon his wife) with blades of grass, meaning a light/negligible strike was used.

M. Asad's note

In the words of the Bible (The Book of Job ii, 9), at the time of his seemingly hopeless suffering Job's wife reproached her husband for persevering in his faith: "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die." According to the classical Qur'an-commentators, Job swore that, if God would restore him to health, he would punish her blasphemy with a hundred stripes. But when he did recover, he bitterly regretted his hasty oath, for he realized that his wife's "blasphemy" had been an outcome of her love and pity for him; and thereupon he was told in a revelation that he could fulfil his vow in a symbolic manner by striking her once with "a bunch of grass containing a hundred blades or more". (Cf. 5:89 - "God will not take you to task for oaths which you may have uttered without thought.")

Ibn Kathir (1301-1372 CE)

Reference: www.jannah.org/morearticles/50.html taken from
www.islamguiden.com/arkiv/stories_of_the_prophets.pdf

In this version, it is implied Job promises to strike his wife a hundred stripes simply for her asking why he doesn't call upon God to remove his affliction. This seems a natural question to ask and at most, perhaps shows lack of steadfastness/patience by her, as note, she does not disbelieve in God, and even acknowledges only God can remove the affliction. Interestingly, Job effectively asks this very thing in 21:83. Also, Job is described as a man of patience/*sabr*, but seemingly had no patience for his wife in this example. It should be noted that punishment for this type of alleged offence by his wife is nowhere to be found in The Quran, and it could be argued this would actually go against its principles. Lastly, when Job's family is returned to him it is described as a mercy in 21:84 and 38:43, i.e. implying it is a positive, making it even less likely that his wife played a negative role in his situation.

Tafsir Al-Qurtubi (1214-1273 CE)

Reference: Vol. 15, p. 212 of www.archive.org/details/al-jami_li-ahkam_al-qurtubi

In this version, it is said during the ailment of Job, his wife used to beg for him and Satan told her a word of disbelief to say and she told her husband Job, so he became angry with her and took an oath to strike her one hundred lashes, so God ordered Job to fulfil his oath by striking her with the bundle of thin grass.

Tafsir Al-Jalalayn (authors: 1459 & 1505 CE)

Reference: altafsir.com

In this version, it contradicts the above two accounts, and says it was when she was late in coming to him once. This seems an overly harsh punishment to administer for such an incident, and does not befit the character of Job as described in The Quran.

Tanwir al-Miqbas min Tafsir Ibn Abbas (authors: 687 & 1414 CE)

Reference: altafsir.com

In this version, it says it was because she said something that displeased God, hence the punishment. It should be noted strongly, that punishment for allegedly saying something that displeases God is completely unheard of in The Quran, even though there are many examples in it of people ridiculing the prophets, God and The Quran. Therefore, this seems highly unlikely.

It should be noted that NONE of the above authors cite any Traditional

narrations/*ahadith* to give weight to their interpretations. This could be because no such Traditional narrations/*ahadith* exist for this verse, and if they do not, then it is unclear where exactly these stories originated from. It is possible they were an embellishment or simply made up to explain the verse. This can be further confirmed by the Biblical account where there is no mention of this incident. It should also be noted that even though The Quran mentions Job briefly (4: 163, 6:84, 21:83, 38:41-44), some aspects of his story are not mentioned in the Biblical version and vice versa.

The traditional interpretation is also problematic for another significant reason: if true, it would be the only example of an oath being expiated by way of symbolic gesture in The Quran. In 5:89 and 2:224-225 it clearly states that God will not hold us to account for thoughtless words in our oaths, or those not intended by the heart. And provides us ways to redeem if we break earnest/sincere oaths, e.g. by charity, fasting.

So, is there an alternative translation and understanding? Since DRB and "*dighthan* (~bundle)" have multiple meanings, there are several possibilities according to Classical Arabic dictionaries, some of which are shown below:

And take with/by your hand a bundle (of twigs, herbs, firewood, grass/stalks, worldly goods) then strike/travel/mix/collide/DRB with/by it...

DGhTh means a bamboo-like plant used in making mats, or used as tent-peg/pin. Thus, it could mean he is ordered to take this plant and set up a tent, as this verse follows the return of his family, and a well known meaning of DRB is to set up tents and/or strike tent-pegs (e.g. a camp is *madrad*).

When researching the word "*tahnath*" (Root: Ha-Nun-Thaa) in Classical Arabic dictionaries, as this form of the word is only used once in The Quran, a common meaning was "incline towards falsehood", "say what is untrue", thus Maulana Ali's rendering is also plausible: And take in thy hand few worldly goods and earn goodness (i.e. traffic) therewith and incline not to falsehood...

Also, according to Lane's Lexicon *DGhTh* by itself can mean firewood, thus this expression could mean to light a fire, giving: And take with your hand firewood, then strike with it, and do not incline towards falsehood.

The reason for the above two is that the ultimate mission of all prophets/messengers is to deliver the message, thus when Job recovered from his affliction it is very likely he would continue in this task since he is described as an excellent servant. Also, a fire is literally and metaphorically used in The Quran as a source of illumination/light/guidance and a gathering place for giving information/guidance. See 2:17, 20:10, 27:7-8. This seems to have been a common custom for the time, and still is today to some extent.

However, upon closer examination of the story of Job in The Quran, the most probable answer is actually contained therein:

And Job when he called unto his Lord: "I have been afflicted with harm, and you are the most merciful of the merciful." [21:83]

So We responded to him, and We removed what was with him of the harm, and We brought him his family and like thereof with them as a mercy from Us and a reminder to those who serve. [21:84]

And recall Our servant Job, when he called upon his Lord: "The serpent/cobra* has afflicted/touched me with distress/difficulty and suffering/punishment." [38:41]

"Strike with your foot, this is a cool spring to wash with and drink." [38:42]

And We granted his family to him and like thereof with them as a mercy from Us; and a reminder for those who possess intelligence. [38:43]

"And take with your hand a bundle, then fashion/mould/put a cover/put forth

with it, and do not incline towards falsehood". We found him patient. What an excellent servant! Indeed, he was oft returning. [38:44]

*Arabic: *shaytan*, root: Shiin-Tay-Nun, English: satan.

"*shaytan*" is not often translated as serpent/cobra, but it is a well known Classical Arabic meaning. In the entire Quran, there are 88 occurrences of *shaytan* (loosely translated as opposing force, be it from oneself or elsewhere), but only two occurrences in which *shaytan* is the one doing the afflicting/touching (Root: Miim-Siin-Siin), and they are 38:41 and 2:275. In both occurrences, the meaning of *shaytan* strongly points to serpent/cobra:

Those who consume usury, they do not stand but as one might stand whom the serpent/cobra confounded* from its touch. That is because they have said: "Trade is the same as usury." While God has made trade lawful, and He has forbidden usury. Whoever has received understanding from His Lord and ceases, then he will be forgiven for what was before this and his case will be with God. But whoever returns, then they are the people of the Fire, in it they will abide eternally. [2:275]

i.e. their footing/position/mentality/reasoning is weak, in disorder, corrupted, they cannot think/speak sensibly etc.

*root: Kha-Ba-Tay, also has a meaning of "touch with a hurt so as to corrupt/disorder and render one insane".

Further, 38:41 is the only occurrence where *shaytan* is the cause of either distress/difficulty (Nun-Sad-Ba) and/or suffering/punishment (Ayn-Thal-Ba), implying this is a unique usage. If we also couple this with knowledge of the usual methodology applied by *shaytan* which is false promises, deceit, temptation, delusion etc we can see that 38:41 and 2:275 are different, i.e. *shaytan* is applying a different methodology here, so the obvious question is to ask why? The evidence points to because in these two occurrences it means serpent/cobra. The Quran also uses this meaning for *shaytan* in 37:64-65 ("It is a tree that grows in the midst of Hell. Its sheaths are like the heads of serpents/cobras").

However, the strongest evidence is the perfect sense it makes within the context of 38:41-44, and what Job was asked to do, all of which are commonly recommended after a snake bite:

- 1) wash - i.e. the wound and/or oneself, which helps calm oneself, lessen risk of infection and possibly reduce any symptoms of fever.
- 2) drink water - this may help slow down heart rate, rehydrate from exhaustion or lost fluids, help calm oneself, and possibly increase rate of venom washout from the body.
- 3) apply a pressure bandage to prevent venom spread or dressing to prevent infection.
- 4) do not incline towards falsehood - a snakebite victim may often become delusional or not think clearly afterwards, hence this advice. This is also shown by 2:275.

However, the last point may also mean "do not fail in your oath/duty" after recovered, because Job was likely travelling in the land when this happened to him, probably spreading God's message, thus God is effectively telling him to not be deterred from continuing in this once recovered.

Also, the words "patient" and "oft-returning" at the end of the verse do suggest a recovery period, and are thus appropriate for the context of snakebite.

Another interesting discovery is that even in the story of Job in The Bible (reference: www.mechon-mamre.org/e/et/et2701.htm) "satan" is stated as inflicting a physical harm, Chapter 2:7 " So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot even unto his crown." After this part, his friends

came to him, and implies he was in pain/grief and in a recovery period and did not speak (perhaps on purpose, i.e. "do not incline towards falsehood"), after which he showed signs of despair, like giving up, but eventually his condition was restored, and became blessed again. Quite often, The Quran corrects myths; the story of Job is perhaps just another example.

To conclude, the understanding presented here for the story of Job fits the grammar, the Arabic, Classical Arabic meanings, logic, cross-referencing and is a self-contained explanation.

15)

duribat + AAalayhimu = *pitched upon them*
[2:61, 3:112, 3:112]

Some use "stricken", "covered", "cast", "stamped", "imposed". This word form is in the perfect passive, meaning the people referenced have received the action expressed in the verb DRB. Mustansir Mir in 'Verbal Idioms of The Quran' explains this idiom as: the image is that of pitching a tent, i.e. covering someone over with shame or disgrace; or one splattering a wall with sticky mud, shame and disgrace have been made to "stick" to a person.

16)

fa *idriboo* fawqa al-aAAnaqi wa *idriboo* minhum kulla banānin = *so strike above/over the necks, and strike from them every/each finger/extremity.*
[8:12]

Some use "smite". Translators are divided when it comes to the issue of who is being addressed by this command, even though the verse itself clearly states who is being addressed at the start, and that is the angels/controllers. In terms of what is more likely, it should be noted that this verse is likely addressed to the controllers than to the believers, due to the Arabic construction (i.e. no obvious break in addressee throughout and the first "*fa*" refers to the controllers, thus the second "*fa*" most likely does also) and it is in the imperative mood, meaning it is a command to be followed. Thus, it is impractical and illogical to command all believers when in battle to strike above/over the necks and each/every finger from the enemy. Especially since there is no need for doing both! Therefore it more likely refers to the controllers, as we shall now examine:

When your Lord inspires to the angels/controllers** "I am with you so keep firm those who believed. I shall cast terror into the hearts/minds*** of those who reject; so strike above/over the necks, and strike from them every/each finger/extremity."* [8:12]

*imperfect tense, i.e. an action in the process of being done.

**angels is better translated as controllers, i.e. forces in control of certain functions/laws. There are some controllers we know about, e.g. those found in nature: $F=ma$, $E=mc^2$ etc. and some we do not know about.

****qalb* is often used like the English word "heart", meaning the physical organ, but more often for the locus of feelings/intuitions etc.

The verse seems to imply then: God will instil/cast terror into the heart/minds of those who reject, and then nature's forces take their course, resulting in affecting anything above the neck, e.g. the throat/mind/thoughts/senses/breathing and limbs/fingers of the rejecters, i.e. likely causing impairment of their performance. Instilling a sense of terror/fear in someone often results in their mind/thoughts/senses being affected/paralysed, and often results in trembling/shaking, especially transferring to the hands, which would likely result in weak fighting skills (swordsmanship or accuracy of

arrows) when in battle. It is also interesting to note that when someone is fearful or anxious/nervous, their throat often becomes dry and precipitates an involuntary gulp reaction, i.e. a manifestation of fear/anxiety. Physical manifestations of anxiety: trouble concentrating, feeling like your mind's gone blank, dizziness, shortness of breath, muscle tension, fatigue, headaches.
(reference: www.helpguide.org/mental/anxiety_types_symptoms_treatment.htm)

The above understanding may also help clarify the confusion some translators have about 8:17 on who really did the defeating and who really did the casting (Arabic: *rama*, root: Ra-Miim-Ya). As it likely refers to the use of "cast" (Arabic: *olqee*, root: Lam-Qaf-Ya) done by God in 8:12. Also see 33:26 for comparison. Interestingly, if we take "rama" to mean "throw or cast" as in arrows or pebbles in 8:17 as done by some translators, then obviously the believers did not strike above the necks and each finger, making this interpretation even less likely. As is common, there are conflicting accounts between the traditional *tafsirs* (source: altafsir.com) on 8:17 and what was thrown, e.g. *Asbab Al-Nuzul* by Al-Wahidi (arrow), and *Tafsir al-Jalalayn* (pebbles), and *Tanwīr al-Miqbās min Tafsīr Ibn 'Abbās* (dust). See M.Asad's note on 8:17 which mentions several possible explanations.

Interestingly, some traditional interpretations take 8:12 to mean the "angels" literally struck off the necks in battle (but neglect to mention the fingers!), but if this was the case, then there would be little need for 8:17 to re-affirm who really did the defeating, i.e. God, as it would be rather obvious. To resolve this problem, some say just as the believers were to strike the necks with their swords the heads of the enemy would fall off, and this was the angels at work! It is a fanciful explanation, but again, they neglect to mention the fingers, or the logic of this application. Thus, the division amongst translators as to whom the command refers to is likely related to their misunderstanding of DRB, hence their awkward explanations.

To conclude, 8:12 is addressed to the controllers, and DRB does not mean a literal/physical "strike" e.g. by sword, as is commonly understood, unless taken metaphorically. Thus, may be better rendered as "put forth" or "put into commotion" in these two occurrences.

17)

fa *darba* al rriqabi *hattai*tha athkhantumoohum = [so strike the necks until you overcome them](#)
[47:4]

Some use "hit", "smite", "strike-off". Whilst this is the most common translation, it should be noted that it is taken by many as an idiom (e.g. *Mustansir Mir*, *Al-Jalalayn*, *Ibn Kathir*), meaning slay or kill. This seems a plausible interpretation as in a battle of swords and arrows no commander would order his soldiers to aim for the necks alone. As a side note, it is interesting to note the difference in phrasing of this verse compared to 8:12, giving further weight to each of them having different meanings as discussed.

However, upon closer examination, there is an alternative translation, which seems the most likely based on the evidence:

[So, when you encounter those who have rejected, then put forth /bring about the captives/slaves; until when you have subdued/overcome them, then strengthen the bind. Then after either grace/favour or ransom, until the war lays down its burdens. That, and had God willed, surely He would have gained victory Himself from them, but He tests some of you with others. And those who get killed in the cause of God, He will never let their deeds be put to waste.](#)

Notes for the above translation:

- 1) "*darba*" is a verbal noun, indicating the act of doing as well as the noun itself, e.g. then putting forth / bringing about the captives/slaves.
- 2) In a battle of swords and arrows no commander would order his soldiers to aim for the necks alone.
- 3) RQB is NEVER used to mean neck elsewhere in The Quran, as the word for neck is "*unuq*" (as used in 8:12 also with DRB). RQB is always used to mean slaves/captives.
- 4) If they were supposed to be beheaded, there would not be a need for an instruction regarding captives. Thus to overcome this apparent omission, many traditional commentators translate "*fa shuddoo al wathāqa*" as "then tie the bond" and say this refers to taking prisoners of war. However, the word "strengthen/tighten (Arabic: *shuddoo*)" implies a pre-existing thing to strengthen/tighten (see its usage in 38:20, 76:28, 28:35, 10:88, 20:31), but if this is true, where is it in context? It can only relate to "*darba al rriqabi*", and thus provides strong proof that this phrase is about bringing about captives from the enemy.
- 5) This translation makes sense because during open/active fighting, the captives may not be totally secure, and could only really be secured once the enemy has been subdued/overcome. Thus, this verse is implying aim to bring about captives, not necessarily kill them, which shows mercy and less aggression in such a situation, even if it means getting killed.
- 6) One meaning of DaRaBa found in Lane's Lexicon is "he made or caused to be or constituted" which is similar to the suggested meaning discussed above.
- 7) I am not aware of a Classical Arabic Dictionary which references verse 47:4 under the root entry of DRB or RQB.

18)

Fa *ragha* AAalayhim *darban* bi al yameeni = [then he turned upon them striking with the right hand](#)
[37:93]

Some use "smiting". In this example, Abraham turned upon man-made idols, breaking them into pieces, see 21:58. Since they were likely stone idols, it is unlikely to mean "beat" as this would be an impractical and very difficult way of breaking/smashing idols, hence no translator used this translation. For similar reasons, literally striking WITH the right hand is also unsuitable, unless understood properly. Even though nearly all translators use "striking" it is important to note that this doesn't really give the full picture of what likely happened. If someone is right-handed, they can easily lift one statue up and slam it on the ground or against a rock or other statues, in order to break them into pieces. This is the most likely scenario. This interpretation is encapsulated in many sources. The following Classical Arabic dictionaries (Lisan ul 3arab; Al-Sah-haah fil lugha; Al Qamoos al-Muheet and Maqayees allugha) have three renditions:

- 1- With might and right
- 2- By his right hand
- 2- By his oath, as per 21:57 where he made an oath to destroy the idols.

M. Asad sees the phrase in question as a metonym for "with all his strength". Tanwir al-Miqbas min Tafsir Ibn Abbas (see [altafsir.com](#)) perhaps recognised a problem with the literal translation, as it states he used an axe! Mustansir Mir says it is an idiom meaning "strike with full force".

As we can clearly see, a literal "striking with the right hand" e.g. punch, karate-chop, slap etc is problematic and not the only understanding. Therefore, are there any Classical Arabic meanings of DRB that possibly fit better IF this verse is taken literally? The following could be used: casting forth, flinging/throwing, putting forth. It may also be interesting to note that if it is taken as a literal striking/hitting, then DRB on its own is unlikely to mean with hand. If it did, there would be no need to mention

what to DRB with in this case.

End Notes for Part 1

It has been shown that there is not one clear occurrence in The Quran in which "beat" is the meaning of DRB.

It seems that the default meaning of DRB is "to put/show forth (from one person/place to another person/place)". This core meaning fits into every occurrence, and thus could be seen as its basic/core meaning. Lane's Lexicon states that its meaning is "to put into commotion" which is similar. Of course, with various prepositions and subject matter, this basic meaning can be refined and better rendered depending on situation.

It is interesting to note from (11) and (12) that in similar contexts, The Quran switches from a non-literal/physical use of DRB (e.g. indicate) to a literal/physical use of DRB (e.g. strike / put forth / point out), by stating what the physical objects are and their interaction with the preposition "*bi* (with/by)".

The only verses in which the preposition "*bi*" is used with DRB are 24:31, 57:13, 26:63, 2:60, 7:160, 2:73, 38:44, 37:93, and in all these occurrences the meaning is a literal/physical usage:

wal *yadribna* bi khumurihinna AAala juyoobihinna = *and let them draw/cast with their covers over/on their chests* [24:31]

fa *duriba* baynahum bi soorin = *then put forth between them with a wall* [57:13]

idrib bi AAasaka al bahra fa infalaqa = *strike with your staff the sea, then it split/separated* [26:63]

idrib bi AAasaka al hajara fa infajarat min hu = *strike with your staff the rock, then vented from it* (twelve springs) [2:60]

idrib bi AAasaka al hajara fa inbajarat min hu = *strike with your staff the rock, then gushed from it* (twelve springs) [7:160]

idriboohu bi baAAadiha = *cite /point out him with some of it* (the murder) [2:73]

Wa khuth bi yadika dighthan fa *idribbihi* wala tahnath = *And take with your hand a bundle, then fashion/put forth with it, and do not incline towards falsehood* [38:44]

Fa ragha AAalayhim *darban* bi al yameeni = *then he turned upon them striking with the right hand* [37:93]

There are two verses that may need clarification:

2:73 should be noted that a murder/crime is something specific and a real world tangible object and thus can be referred to as such. This might offer a possible reason as to why 2:73 was traditionally translated as it was, because if a murder/crime was not seen as a valid object/reference to DRB with, then the only other valid object would be the dead heifer.

38:44 the act of DRB upon what/whom is not specifically mentioned, thus several interpretations may have existed at the time. Once the true context and meaning is identified as shown previously, this aspect becomes self explanatory and what/whom is not needed.

It is interesting to note that these are the only two verses with preposition "*bi*" that require careful study in order to reveal the most likely answer, thus for these two verses it is likely several interpretations may have existed. If physical/literal strike was one interpretation, then these verses could have been used to favour a physical/literal striking in 4:34.

Part 2

Translation and analysis of 4:34

(immediate context before 4:34 is wealth/inheritance, and after is kindness/giving)

And do not envy what God preferred/bestowed with it, some of you over others. For the men is a portion of what they gained, and for the women is a portion of what they gained. And ask God from His favour, God is knowledgeable over all things. [4:32] And for each We have made inheritors from what the parents and the relatives left, and those you made an oath with you shall give them their portion. God is witness over all things. [4:33]

The men are supporters/maintainers of the women with what God preferred/bestowed on some of them over others and with what they spent of their money, so the righteous women are dutiful/obedient; guardians/protectors to the unseen with what God guarded/protected. And as for those women you fear their uprising/disloyalty, then you shall advise them, and (then) abandon them in the bed, and (then) *idriboo* them. If they obeyed you, then seek not against them a way; Truly, God is High, Great. [4:34] And if you (plural) feared disunion/breach/rift between them two, then appoint a judge from his family and a judge from hers. If they both want to reconcile, then God will bring agreement between them. God is Knowledgeable, Expert. [4:35]

"*idriboo*" has been left untranslated for now.

Analysis of 4:34 and context

"supporters/maintainers" (Arabic: *qawwamoon*, root: Qaf-Waw-Miim) occurs in the same form in:

4:135 (stand / stand up / support / maintain with justice as witnesses to God)

5:8 (stand / stand up / support / maintain for/to God as witnesses with justice).

M. Asad: The expression *qawwam* is an intensive form of *qa'im* ("one who is responsible for" or "takes care of" a thing or a person). Thus, *qama ala l-mar'ah* signifies "he undertook the maintenance of the woman" or "he maintained her" (see Lane's Lexicon, Volume 8, p2995). The form *qa'im* can be found in 4:5 and 5:97. It should be noted that the occurrences of 4:135, 5:8 and 4:5, 5:97 cancel out some male-centric translations, such as "charge of" (M. Pickthal), "managers of" (Arberry, Hilali/Khan/Saheeh), "superior to" (Rodwell) which simply do not fit once cross referenced. It refers to a wider duty of care/responsibility, such as providing for the family/household which is discussed in several verses [2:228, 2:233, 4:34, 65:6], and is the default role for the male, but not the only role as it can depend on situation. Contrast this to The Quran never mentioning managing one's wife or being in charge of her and the correct meaning becomes obvious. In fact, there is not one example of God addressing the husband/wife relationship in this manner, e.g. all examples involving decisions between marriage partners are in the reciprocal Arabic word form, e.g. "*taraadaa*" [2:232-233, 4:24], "*tashaawar*" [2:233], which means they are mutual. Lastly, the actual verse of 4:34 clarifies/limits the scope of meaning of "*qawwamoon*" to maintenance, i.e. because of God bestowing more on some of them than on others and with what they spent (perfect tense, i.e. an action done/completed) of their money. To state the obvious, without spending on someone, a person cannot be regarded as a supporter/maintainer of them.

"...bima (with what) faddalaAllahu (God preferred) baAAadahum (some of them) AAala (over/above/on) baAAadin* (others)..." *masculine

This likely refers to *al rijal* (the men) as indicated by keeping the same suffix reference later in the sentence, i.e. its logical and contextual flow.

See "*baAAadahum AAala baAAadin*" / "some of them above others" in 2:253 and 17:21,

and also 6:53 "baAAḍahum bi baAAḍin" / "some of them with others", for a comparison.

However, there are three theoretically possible interpretations of this phrase: with what God preferred on some (men/women) over others (men/women)

OR

with what God preferred on some (men) over others (men)

OR

with what God preferred on some (men) over others (men/women)

The keyword being "some". Thus, whichever way it is translated it proves the obvious, that not all men are preferred/bestowed equally, and/or not all men are preferred/bestowed more than women. Also, the term "preferred" is general, unless made specific in context, and in this case likely refers to distribution of wealth, e.g. inheritance, as mentioned by similar phrasing in 4:32. Since spending of wealth is mentioned separately, the preference could refer to the fact that men do not have the physical burden of pregnancy, birth and suckling, hence are in a more favourable position to work/provide, by default.

It should be noted that some traditional commentators interpret this phrasing to suggest men are preferred to women with respect to various things but this is completely disproven by the Arabic itself, as the masculine plural is used in the phrase. The masculine plural in Arabic either refers to an all male group or male+female group, NEVER all female group. To add to this point, the same phrasing is used for preferring some messengers to others [2:253] and some prophets to others [17:55] and yet The Quran repeatedly tells us not to make distinction among them. The best person according to The Quran is whoever is the most righteous/pious/God-conscious [49:13]. As we can see, The Quran is not stating a fixed rule, i.e. that all men are the maintainers/supporters of women, they are only so if they fulfil the criteria and it is referring to the wider duty of care/responsibility men have as mentioned above.

"dutiful/obedient" (Arabic: *qanit*, root: Qaf-Nun-Ta), is used in The Quran to mean "dutiful/devout/obedient to God" in all verses and in some verses is used to describe both man and woman [2:116, 2:238, 3:17, 3:43, 4:34, 16:120, 30:26, 33:35, 33:35, 39:9, 66:5, 66:12]. There is one exception to this, when in 33:31 it states "*qanit* to God and His messenger", but this still implies it is in the context of God's commands.

Though this word is mostly translated correctly as "obedient," when read in a translation it can convey a false message implying women must be "obedient" to their husbands as their inferiors. The same word is mentioned in 66:12 as a description of Mary who, according to the Quran, did not even have a husband. Also, in this verse as Mary confirmed the Words of her Lord and His revelations she is described as of those who are "*qanit*", again implying it is in the context of abiding by God's message. This is possibly reinforced by what follows, see below.

"...guardians/protectors to the unseen/private with what God

guarded/protected..." - may be related to what came before, i.e. implying part of being dutiful/obedient is to be this. When used for humans in this way, the unseen (*al ghayb*) cannot refer to THE unseen, i.e. the same unseen as God knows THE unseen, thus must refer to what is unseen/hidden/private from the people at large and/or her husband, but not to the person addressed. Seems to imply that whatever God ordered to be guarded (i.e. via scripture) in private/unseen, this is what they should guard. Also see 12:52 for an example of betrayal in the *ghayb*/unseen/private.

"...And as for those women you fear..." (Arabic: *takhafoona*, root: Kha-Waw-Fa) is in the imperfect form, meaning an action in the process of being done, NOT completed. This should be carefully compared to 4:128 in which this same word is in the perfect form (i.e. an action done/completed). Thus, in 4:34 the fear being felt by the husband

is an ongoing thing, about something that may or may not take place. It is important to note that the context strongly implies that the husband does not wish to end the marriage, hence him "fearing" and the conflict-resolution measures that follow.

"uprising" (Arabic: *nushuz*, root: Nun-Shiin-Zay) is the literal meaning and in context means rising up (above relationship/marital limits).

It is interesting to note that there is a measure of relativity about *nushuz* in the sense that what constitutes *nushuz* in the eyes of one person may not be so viewed by another, or the judgment that one's spouse has been guilty of *nushuz* is partly a subjective and personal one. That is why the verse says: "if you fear *nushuz*..." instead of for example, "if you find *nushuz*...". In other words, *nushuz* is unlikely to mean something in the husband's presence or obvious/blatant in his presence as 4:34 says "if you fear", so it is reasonable to assume it refers to something not done in the husband's presence. This could be related to the earlier use of "...guardians to the unseen...". If we take these factors into account, it suggests unseen "disloyalty/infidelity/ill-conduct/rebellion" in some way.

"...then/so you shall advise them..." (Arabic: *ithoo*, root: Waw-Ayn-Za), and does not indicate in a harsh manner, as can be seen by its occurrences in The Quran, for example 31:13-19. The "fa" meaning then/so means whatever follows can only apply to the wife in whom the husband fears *nushuz*, not others. It also implies that what follows is a sequential order of recommendations and not simultaneous.

"...and abandon them in the bed..." (Arabic: *hjuoo*, root: ha-Jiim-Ra), means forsake, leave off, desert, abandon [see 19:46, 73:10, 74:5].

It is important to note this verb applies to the husband, NOT the wife, thus translations such as "banish them to beds apart" (M. Pickthal), "send them to beds apart" (Dawood), are incorrect. This is further proven by the use of "*fee*" meaning "in". Lastly, "*al madajiAA*" (root: Dad-Jiim-Ayn) literally means "the place of rest/sleep/reclining", thus could mean bed or even bedroom. With regard to "*al madajiAA*" there is no half measures, it clearly means fully abandon/desert them in this. It strongly implies no sexual relations. Also, this step reinforces the implication that it is unlikely to be a simultaneous series of steps, as "abandon them in the bed" would only be done at sleeping time, implying a time gap. This step should not be viewed as totally against the wife, as it would also result in the husband re-evaluating their relationship, and make him weigh up his fear against his desire to be with her, thus helping compromise/reconciliation.

As a side note, if a spouse is possibly having an affair, then not sharing beds (i.e. no sex) could also potentially reduce spread of sexually transmitted diseases, giving another benefit of this advice/step.

"If they obeyed you..." (Arabic: *ataAAna*, root: Tay-Waw-Ayn) is in the perfect form, i.e. an action done/completed.

This "obeyed" MUST refer to something in the context, thus the only possibility is the admonition/advisement given by the husband. It is perhaps interesting to note that this may have an implication that anything other than advisement is regarded as seeking a way against them, i.e. abandoning them in bed and (then) *idriboo* them. We will discuss later that it is possible to infer that the 'abandoning them in bed' step could be limited in time, whilst the advisement part whilst still maintaining normal sexual relations does not have a time limit, further reinforcing this first step as what is preferred, hence it being first.

"And if YOU feared disunion/breach/rift between them..." (Arabic: *shiqqa*, root: Shin-Qaf-Qaf), and the "feared" before it is in the perfect form, i.e. an action done/completed. The "you" is in the plural form and can only refer to the

community/court/authority/etc.

"...then appoint a judge..." (Arabic: *ibAAatho hakaman*, roots: Ba-Ayn-Thal, Ha-Kaf-Miim), literally means to put in motion or send/appoint a judge/arbiter. The Arabic confirms that the plural "you" can ONLY refer to someone/something in a position to put this in motion, so it cannot mean either side's family for example. Also, appointing an arbiter from each side is not a simple task as it would require representations from husband and wife or each side of the family, and suggests the process has become formalised, i.e. judicial. This clearly confirms the court/authority is involved at this stage.

"reconcile" (Arabic: *islahan*, root: Sad-Lam-Ha), literally means to make right, and has an implication that a wrong or something negative exists to make right.

In order to better understand 4:34 we must also translate and analyse 4:128, in which a wife feared *nushuz* from her husband:

They ask you for divine instruction concerning women. Say, "God instructs you regarding them, as has been recited for you in the book about the mother of orphans who you want to marry without giving them what has been ordained/written for them, as well as the powerless children, and your duty to treat orphans with equity. Whatever good you do, God has full knowledge of it. [4:127]

And if a woman feared from her husband uprising/disloyalty or alienation /turning away, then there is no blame upon them that they reconcile between themselves a reconciliation; and the reconciliation is better. And miserliness/selfishness is present in the souls, and if you do good and are conscientious/forethoughtful, then surely God is aware what you do. **[4:128]**

And you will not be able to be fair between the women even if you make every effort; so do not deviate all the deviation so you leave her as one hanging. And if you reconcile and are conscientious/forethoughtful, then surely God is Forgiving, Merciful. [4:129]
And if they separate, then God will provide for each of them from His bounty. God is Vast, Wise. [4:130]

Analysis of 4:128 and context

"And if a woman feared..." (Arabic: *khafat*, root: Kha-Waw-Fa) is in the perfect form, meaning an action done or completed. In contrast to 4:34, it is not an ongoing fear, it is perfect tense, i.e. the action of fearing happened by the subject. In other words, what follows is what to do if "*nushuz* or *iAAaradan*" is feared to have taken place or is feared to be happening. This is a crucial distinction. Interestingly, even though it is in the past tense, the word "feared" is still used, and not "found" or "committed" for example, meaning it still does not refer to something obvious/blatant, and there is an element of relativity/subjectivity to it. This is an important point to reflect upon.

"...uprising or turning away..." (Arabic: *iAAaradan*, root: Ayn-Ra-Dad) literally means "turning away" and is stated separately from "uprising / *nushuz*".

Again the word "feared" implies a degree of relativity, i.e. judging "*iAAaradan*" is subjective, thus is not something obvious. Many translators opted for "desertion" which is not quite right because in the context the husband is unwilling to initiate divorce, which implies "desertion" is unlikely to be feared. Also, whatever "*iAAaradan*" means it must be sufficiently distinct from "*nushuz*" hence a differentiation can be made. By cross-referencing its other usage in The Quran the only possibility is "turning away", and in this context may be better understood as alienation; which means: make withdrawn or isolated or emotionally dissociated. M. Abdel Haleem opts for this in his translation, and others opt for similar words such as "aversion/evasion".

Interestingly, this may shed light on why 4:128 uses "*wa/and*" as a continuation from

the previous verse 4:127 which is about the man wishing to marry a mother of orphans in a non-Quranic manner, e.g. without giving them what is written for them (e.g. dowry). So, let's assume, this same man already has a wife, there are only a few possibilities:

(1) if the current wife gives consent, then all is fine.

(2) the wife says no, and the husband accepts the decision without problems.

(3) the wife says no, and the husband disagrees or agrees superficially but becomes suspected of causing problems.

Situation (3) would result in the wife being in fear of rising up (above marital/relationship limits, e.g. disloyalty/infidelity) or turning away (alienation), from her husband. As we can see, our understanding of "*nushuz*" and "*iAAaradan*" fit perfectly in both 4:34 and 4:128. Please note that is not to say that what is being discussed in 4:128-129 is a husband doing such a thing, it is only one possible situation, and this specific situation simply helps to serve as a checking mechanism to ensure we have a reasonable grasp of the words being used.

It should also be noted that since *nushuz* can be done by either partner (husband or wife) the term cannot signify a ruler-ruled relationship, as some translators imply.

"...then there is no blame upon them that they reconcile between themselves a reconciliation; and the reconciliation is better..."

Since the wife feared a wrong has been done, emphasis is given that even in such a situation reconciliation is better, i.e. better than being uncompromising or separating. This can be equally applied to a reversal of situation, as shown by 4:34. One possible reason for the use of "there is no blame upon them that they reconcile" is because of other verses which state "adulterer for adulterer", "marry those who are good", "corrupt women are for corrupt men, good women for the good men" etc, see 24:3, 24:26, 24:32. In other words, a suspected/unproven case of wrongdoing, is not the same as a proven case, so there is no blame if they reconcile. It could be argued that this explanation does not quite explain WHY it adds "...between themselves", as assigning blame upon a couple if they reconciled between themselves seems a very unusual thing to imply. This seemingly simple yet important observation will be returned to later. It should be noted that the command is a conditional one: "And IF a woman feared.... then.....".

"miserliness/selfishness" (Arabic: *al shshuhha*, root: Shiin-Ha-Ha) literally means non-giving / stingy, and is understandable in the context of reconciliation, compromise, possible compensation etc. It also links with 4:127.

"conscientious/forethoughtful" (Arabic: *tattaqoo*, root: Waw-Qaf-Ya) literally means guarding or guarding oneself by means of something, i.e. by being forethoughtful/conscientious/mindful/preserving of one's duty, guards oneself from any possible punishment from God.

"...so do not deviate all the deviation..." (Arabic: *fala tameeloo kulla al mayli*, root: Miim-Ya-Lam), see 4:27 for similar occurrence (Arabic: *tameeloo maylan AAatheeman*). This implies some deviation has occurred, advising not to deviate all the way, i.e. emphasising to do the right thing. This usage further reinforces the implication that the husband is in the wrong in this situation or the cause of negativity, and use of the perfect/past tense of "feared".

"... as one hanging..." (Arabic: *ka al muAAallaqati*, root: Ayn-Lam-Qaf) literally means like/as the suspended/hanging/stuck.

Lane's Lexicon states for this specific context: a wife whose husband has been lost to her or been left in suspense; neither husbandless nor having a husband; husband does not act equitably with her or release her; left in suspense.

It is clear from 4:129 that the husband has not initiated divorce/*talaq* yet and is given

two options: either reconcile (i.e. act equitably) or separate (i.e. divorce her). One may wonder if the wife is in such a situation, why doesn't she initiate divorce/release? The likely answer is given in 4:128 by the use of "feared", as the usage of this word in The Quran is when whatever is feared is undesired by the subject. Unlike other words, which are closer to: suspicion, doubt, perceive, think or suppose (Arabic roots: n-k-r, r-y-b, sh-k-k, w-j-s, za-n-n). There is also a possibility that she may be financially dependent on him, thus if she initiates release, courts may allocate less in settlement, especially if no provable wrongdoing has been committed by the husband [see 2:229, 4:20]. Thus she may not wish to divorce but is unhappy with her husband and/or marriage. Hence the emphasis on the husband to do the right thing. Similarly, we can see in 4:34, when it is the husband fearing something, he adopts a preventative procedure, i.e. whatever he fears is undesired by him.

"And if they separate..." (Arabic: *yatafarraga*, root: Fa-Ra-Qaf) is in the dual form. The only other time this root is used in the context of divorce procedure is 65:2, in which the couple separate/*fariqoo*, after initiating divorce/*talaq* and completion of the provisional divorce interim waiting period, i.e. to separate/FRQ is the final step.

Part 3
Discussion of evidence For/Against wife beating

The sequence for 4:34-35 is as follows:

fear uprising/disloyalty --> advise them --> abandon them in bed --> *idriboo* them --> authority feared breach/rift thus appoint arbiters --> reconcile or separate/end

To understand the sequence of events, we must fully understand the divorce procedure according to The Quran:

- 'cooling-off' period for those who swear away from their wives sexually, limited to 4 months [2:226]*
- after this 4 month 'cooling-off' period, the options are: revert to normal relations or divorce/*talaq* [2:227]
- post-divorce interim/waiting period is 3 menstruation periods or 3 months, if pregnant it is until they deliver, if widowed it is 4 months and 10 days [2:228, 2:234, 65:4]
- if no sex has taken place after marriage, then no interim period is required after divorce/*talaq* [33:49]. Compensation may be due however if dower was agreed upon [2:237]
- during post-divorce interim period, wife remains in the same house, and is compensated by way of maintenance during this period in the same living standard as the husband, each according to their means [2:236, 2:241, 65:1, 65:6-7]**
- divorce is automatically retracted if sex between the couple takes place during the interim period [inference from 2:226, 33:49, 65:1]***
- if couple reconciles, then divorce/*talaq* may be retracted twice during interim-period. If divorced a third time it is final unless she marries another then they divorce, only then can original partners re-marry. If the couple fear they will not maintain God's bounds, then wife may give some dowry back to release herself [2:229-230]
- if couple still wishes to follow through with the divorce/*talaq* after the end of the interim period and undergo final separation, then two witnesses are required to complete the process [65:2]
- exceptions exist, in certain situations [60:10-11]
- the onus is upon the person in the wrong to rectify the situation or initiate divorce/release, and it is an obligation upon the contract-breaking party to compensate the other [2:229, 2:237, 4:19, 4:128-129, 33:28, 60:10-11]

As a side note, the last point is also mentioned in traditional Islamic law and sources, see M.Asad's note on 2:229. This system would also protect the male if he were to marry a female who only did so for his money or the marital gift then she wished to end the marriage later, because since the contract-breaking party compensates the other partner, she would have to do so accordingly. Similarly, this would protect the female if she were to marry a male who only did so for lustful reasons then wished to end the marriage later, as he would then have to compensate her.

*Also possibly provides a time limit due to a practice of the time in which husbands did not have sex with their wives but also did not divorce them, see 58:1-4, 33:4; i.e. leaving them in a state between marriage and divorce. Similar to what is implied by 4:129.

**And the same goes for the lesser situation of 'cooling-off' period. Obviously, the wife would not be removed from the home for the lesser serious 'cooling-off' period then

brought back just for the post-divorce interim period.

*** Inference from 2:226 is that resumption of sexual relations is equated to reconciliation, thus no initiation of divorce. Hence, same proviso for post-divorce interim period, i.e. sex = reconciliation.

From the plural usage in the following verses it can be seen that the court/authority becomes involved post-divorce/*talaq*:

2:229 ("... and if you (plural) fear that the couple will not uphold God's limits...")

65:1 ("... and you (plural) keep count of the period...")

Which makes sense, because it is only after divorce/*talaq* that the authority would be needed to make things official and ensure The Quran's laws are being followed, e.g. record divorce date, keep count of the interim period, possible examination of marriage contract, mediate, determine compensation/maintenance, living arrangement and any settlement (if disputed).

Thus, from 4:35, a question arises: in this case has the authority/court become involved before or after divorce/*talaq*? The traditional/common understanding is that divorce/*talaq* has not taken place, and the dispute can be resolved or the marriage terminated by the arbiters themselves, in conjunction with the court/authority. This information is not explicitly mentioned in The Quran, but it seems the implied and logical sequence of events. What is not explicitly mentioned however is that whilst it is clear the authority has become involved by 4:35 and is appointing arbiters, is how and why has the authority got involved? How does the authority know the extent of disagreement between the couple? How did they find out there was a problem in the first place? Who told them? To answer these questions, we will now analyse this seemingly unaddressed problem:

4:35 states "And if you (plural) feared *shiqqa*/disunion/breach/rift between them", meaning, feared the couple will not come to an agreement or resolution on their own, due to them turning away from each other and/or a variance in view [see 2:137, 2:176, 11:89, 22:53 on usage of Sh-Q-Q]. Also see what Lane's Lexicon says about this word when it is used with between/*bayna* as in 4:35, e.g. division, disunion and dissension, remoteness.

The situation implies to not come to an agreement or resolution is a form of *shiqqa*/breach/rift, which has a negative connotation, and hence "reconciliation is better" according to 4:128. "Feared" is in the perfect tense (i.e. an action done/completed) in 4:35. Note it does not say "found" or such like, implying a degree of relativity/subjectivity about the situation, i.e. *shiqqa* in this case is not something definite. This eliminates some translations which translate *shiqqa* as fissuring/dissension/dispute. Also, if the court/authority were informed of fissuring/dissension/dispute, then it is no longer feared, but a fact, so this does not make sense either. Thus, not only does the authority have to find out there is a problem going on between the couple but also reasonable knowledge suggesting no agreement will take place without intervention. This is a significant amount of information for the authority to ascertain.

Bearing in mind The Quran's many references on honesty, speaking what is best etc and its significant negativity towards gossip, slander, spying on others, backbiting etc it is difficult to imagine how the authority could uncover such information in a just and appropriate manner, other than by directly [e.g. 4:148, 58:1]. Not to mention the impractical and somewhat arbitrary nature of a court/authority deciding amongst itself to get involved in some cases and not others. Since this court/authority intervention is unexplained by the traditional commentaries I have read, we can only speculate they assume one spouse or both or perhaps even others inform the authority of the situation somehow. If the authority is informed indirectly, this is impractical and would mean they become concerned about a marital disagreement that is not serious enough to

warrant divorce/release or be brought up by either spouse directly, yet they intervene anyway. This is unlikely.

Authority involvement prior to divorce/*talaq* would make 4:35 the odd one out. Whilst this makes sense because the onus is on the person in the wrong to initiate divorce/release and the contract-breaking party compensates the other, but if no-one is at provable fault, as in this case, then there is no obligation upon them to correct or initiate divorce/release, hence the authority becoming involved prior to divorce/*talaq*. However, it is very odd that The Quran would not explain how this apparent exception to the rule comes about. Especially so, since this situation would be quite a common occurrence, and The Quran treats divorce very seriously and discusses the procedure and options in detail, yet apparently neglects this aspect.

It has been argued that *idriboo* in 4:34 means "leave them" or "separate from them", which interestingly has some support in the traditional commentaries and fits better than "strike/beat". However, I feel this translation is possible only as long as it does not imply divorce/*talaq*, as The Quran always uses the word *talaq* to mean divorce AND since the contract-breaking party compensates the other, it would be unfair for the husband to initiate divorce when he has done nothing wrong in this case. There are other problems with this understanding as it is not quite a conflict-resolution step and if not meant to imply divorce/*talaq* then it seemingly penalises the husband implying he should move out. Also, any degree of leaving/separating/shunning may fall afoul of doing *iAAaradan* (alienation / turning away) in 4:128, thus such a conflict-resolution step would give the wife a legitimate reason for ending the marriage, thus unless clarified/limited this meaning does not fit well.

As we can see, a mechanism should exist that allows the authority to be notified and resolves a situation like this in a fair manner. We will now review examples from The Quran itself to see if an answer is given.

There is one example in The Quran which has aspects similar to the situation in 4:34, shown below:

Previous context is sexual relations between a married couple:

God will not call you to account for your casual oaths, but He will call you to account for what has entered your hearts. God is Forgiving, Clement. [2:225]

For those who swear away* from their women, waiting four months, then if they go back/revert**, then God is Forgiving, Merciful. [2:226]

And if they decided/resolved*** on the divorce, then God is Hearer, Knower. [2:227]

And the divorced women shall wait 3 menstruation periods... [2:228]

*root: Alif-Lam-Waw, see Lane's Lexicon.

**Fa-Ya-Alif

***Ayn-Zay-Miim

In this situation the husband swears to be away sexually from the wife, up to a period of 4 months, after which, he must return to normal marital relations or divorce. In this example, swearing away is not some sort of routine thing, as it clearly implies the sequence can end in the husband divorcing his wife. And of course, we can reasonably assume if a couple are happy with each other sexual relations would be the norm. A maximum of 4 months is likely given as it protects the affected spouse from being in this unfavourable position for a long time with no resolution, e.g. see 58:1-4, 33:4, and similar to what is implied in 4:129.

Thus, this example is similar to 4:34 because the husband would almost certainly discuss the situation with his wife first, then swear to be away from her sexually (i.e. abandon them in the bed). In 2:226-227 the step after abandon them in bed is either: reconcile or divorce, there is no mention of *idriboo-hunna* (traditionally translated as *beat/strike-them*). So, is this a different situation to the traditionally understood

sequence in 4:34 or are we meant to assume beating is an option even though it is not mentioned? Well, the obvious difference is that in 4:34 the husband is fearing *nushuz*/uprising/disloyalty from his wife and does not want the marriage to end, but in this case, he is the one considering divorce and there is no hint of the wife being the source of negativity. So, the recommendation seems to be a general one: if one partner is considering an end to the marriage, it is permissible to have a cooling-off period, limited in time. Afterwards, they must either reconcile or divorce/release.

Another example from The Quran in which events are mentioned prior to a divorce can be found in 66:1-5. In this example, the wives of the prophet disclosed a private matter, then it goes on to say they should ask God for forgiveness, but if they band together against the prophet, then this situation may lead to divorce. Interestingly, wives banding together could be considered a form of uprising/*nushuz*, but the options given here are only: repent/amend or divorce. Again, no mention or implication of beating/striking.

Furthermore, in the example of 33:28 it says if the wives of the prophet prefer the material gain of this world then the prophet will provide such and release them in a good/gracious manner. Again, there is no mention of any hostile actions even though the behaviour of the wife is unbecoming for a believer. Interestingly, the word divorce/*talaq* is not used in this case, possibly because the prophet/husband was not at fault hence this word is not appropriate.

An interesting example also appears in 58:1-4 in which a woman argues with the prophet complaining about her husband, and how the husband has estranged/alienated her by claiming her to be as his mother's back, which was a practice of the time, making the wife unlawful for himself but also not technically divorcing her allowing her to remarry, i.e. leaving her stuck/suspended.

This is an interesting example because if we suppose this could be classed as a case of *iA'aradan*/alienation or *shiqaaq*/breach/rift, then the next step the wife took was to cite her husband's behaviour/actions to the authority, which would have been the prophet at the time. The correlation is specifically with 4:129 which advises the husband not to leave her stuck/suspended and this is the EXACT situation described in 58:1-4, thus showing that in a situation of no resolution, the next step would be to cite the partner/situation to the authority. If we correlate this example to what the next step would be in 4:34, if the steps are followed and no resolution is forthcoming, the next step would be to cite the partner to the authority. This would explain how the court/authority knew of the situation between the couple in 4:35. Since '*idriboo* them' is the only step in between "abandon them in bed" and the authority becoming aware of the situation, is there a Classical Arabic meaning of DRB that fits in the sequence? The answer is a resounding yes, as one of its primary and most common meanings is: to cite/probation, declare/mention, put/show forth, point out or indicate. As we can see, it is a perfect fit.

If the wife can cite her husband to the authority when the problem/deadlock in her marital situation is not her fault in 58:1-4, what is stopping the husband from doing the same with his wife in 4:34? The answer is of course: nothing.

This understanding would make The Quran cater for all possibilities, giving this view further weight. The onus is on whoever is in the wrong to either amend or initiate divorce/release, and this gives us the following theoretical possibilities:

- 1) husband is in the wrong, wife unhappy, he divorces wife, with compensation if applicable.
- 2) husband is in the wrong, wife happy, no divorce.
- 3) husband wishes to end marriage, wife happy, he divorces wife, with compensation if applicable.
- 4) wife is in the wrong, husband unhappy, she releases herself from marriage, with compensation if applicable.

- 5) wife is in the wrong, husband happy, no release.
- 6) wife wishes to end marriage, husband happy, she releases herself from marriage, with compensation if applicable.
- 7) whoever is in the wrong does not initiate divorce/release, spouse can cite them to court/authority, then judgement and/or arbitration as necessary etc.

For the court/authority to be involved at situation 7 also makes logical and practical sense because in a situation of unfairness a court/authority is needed for mediation/resolution. Since whichever partner initiates divorce/release may have to provide compensation, a mechanism must be in place to solve the problem if the partner in the wrong refuses to do so, most probably in order to protect their wealth. This link to wealth also perfectly explains the context surrounding both verses, 4:34 and 4:128, and why neither partner who is potentially in the wrong is initiating divorce/release, i.e. the wife in 4:34 and the husband in 4:128. It is recommended to re-read the verses bearing this understanding in mind. As we can see a coherent, logical and practical explanation is easily formed with this understanding.

Also, however the court/authority came to find out about the couple in 4:34-35, how did the court/authority come to find out about the couple in 58:1-4 in the exact same situation of breach/rift, i.e. no resolution? She cited the husband to the authority. If the traditional position somehow implies the couple used a different method in 4:34 to make the authority aware of the situation, then they have to explain why the difference between the two examples, without causing a logical and practical inconsistency. Quite simply, it cannot be explained away and all points to one answer: in a situation of no reconciliation and the partner in the wrong will not initiate divorce/release, the step prior to the authority intervening is for one partner to cite/indicate the other (to the authority).

Interestingly, it is often noted that for the husband, *iAAradan*/alienation by the wife is not mentioned in 4:34, yet it is mentioned in 4:128 when done by the husband, but if we imagine that the husband is trying to advise/counsel his wife and it does not work, then abandons her in bed, making her reflect further, and this does not work, then this does imply an element of alienation by the wife to her husband, i.e. she is not listening to him, she is unresponsive, not compromising, they are growing apart. This would make the two situations much more alike in comparison.

Since *shiqqa* means breach/rift without *talaq*/divorce in 4:35, then arbitration should be called for in 4:128-129, as this is a clear example of breach/rift IF the situation continues as is, but arbitration is not automatically called for: why? This identifies why The Quran states in 4:128 "...then there is no blame upon them that they reconcile between themselves a reconciliation, and the reconciliation is better", i.e. better than an irreconcilable breach/rift between them. As it implies at this point, others would be involved or at least can get involved if requested, but there is no blame upon them that they attempt to reconcile between themselves first.

It is very important to note the "*fa*" in Arabic which means "so/then" and is a conjunctive which links two related statements together, so when it says "...then there is no blame upon them that they reconcile between themselves..." it is because of what came before: "And IF a woman feared from her husband uprising/disloyalty or turning away /alienation...". So, the obvious question is: why the difference between 4:128 and 4:34 when the husband fears uprising/disloyalty from his wife, as 4:34 gives steps in-between, THEN discusses mediation by others? To illustrate what I mean, see the diagram below:

4:34

husband feared uprising/disloyalty from wife

---> **advise** ---> **abandon in bed**

---> (if still no resolution) *idriboo/cite them*

---> authority feared breach/rift (i.e. no resolution) thus appoint arbiters

4:128

if a wife feared uprising/disloyalty from husband

---> **then no blame upon them that they try to reconcile between themselves**

---> but if situation continues as is, i.e. no resolution, authority/arbiters can get involved (THINK: what would come before this step)

The only difference between the two situations is the husband is fearing (imperfect tense, i.e. action in the process of being done, incomplete) in 4:34 and taking conflict-resolution steps, and in 4:128 the wife feared (perfect tense, i.e. action done/completed), so this logically implies once the spouse reaches the stage of feared a wrongdoing has happened or is happening THEN others can be involved BUT there is no blame upon them if they reconcile between themselves first. In fact, it is effectively a recommendation prioritising reconciliation. In other words, do not hastily escalate the situation and get the authority involved. As a side note, in addition to logic and context, this also provides more evidence that to take one's time in trying to resolve the situation, i.e. do not execute all 3 steps (advise, abandon in bed, *idriboo*) in 4:34 all at once.

So, if we imagine in 4:34 the husband fears uprising/disloyalty, and tries the conflict-resolution steps (advise, abandon in bed), and his wife does not respond or compromise etc he would eventually reach a point where he would think it is more likely uprising/disloyalty is occurring than not occurring or feels no resolution will take place, and would then "cite/indicate them". As we can see the husband tried to reconcile first and did not hastily escalate the situation. If we correlate this sequence to 4:128, as soon as the wife feared uprising/disloyalty The Quran implies others can theoretically get involved, but no blame upon them if they reconcile between themselves first. But if the situation continued as is and she is left hanging/stuck as implied by 4:129, authority can get involved (confirmed by the example of 58:1-4). This would also explain the conditional "and if..." at the start of 4:128, as prior to this, the wife may just have had suspicions but not feared uprising/disloyalty has actually happened.

For sake of clarity, let's then re-arrange the steps to show the sequence for 4:128 if the husband didn't do the right thing and left her hanging/stuck/suspended (i.e. no resolution):

4:128

if a wife feared uprising/disloyalty from husband

---> **then no blame upon them that they try to reconcile between themselves**

---> (if still no resolution, e.g. she is suspended/stuck, do as 58:1-4) *idriboo/cite them*

---> authority/arbiters can get involved

A perfect match with 4:34!

In both 4:34 and 4:128, the spouses try to reconcile first, and if it does not work one spouse cites the other/situation to the authority who can then get involved. Thus, the sequence of events in 4:34 and 4:128 are identical. All the information reinforces and compliments each other. Interestingly, there may be no other explanation that is possible that could provide such equality and coherence, i.e. *idriboo* MUST mean "cite/indicate, point out, declare, put/show forth" otherwise it will create

inconsistencies, and any inconsistencies would have to be explained.

With regard to inconsistencies, one of the most important criteria to appreciate when trying to understand the message of The Quran is to bear in mind its rather imposing and impressive claim:

[Do they not ponder on The Quran? If it was from any other than God they would have found in it much variance/inconsistency/contradiction. \[4: 82\]](#)

We will now examine other information from The Quran itself to see if this helps us determine the more likely answer (beating/striking or something else).

Additional Information:

4: 36 discusses and emphasises being kind/good to all, and is linked to 4: 34-35 by "wa/and", which makes this context less favourable to the traditional understanding of wife beating.

To "fear" something may happen or is happening does NOT prove anything, i.e. that a wrongdoing has actually taken place. So if equivalence is required for an actual wrongdoing [16:126, 42:40], then it cannot be more for a *suspected* wrongdoing. If there were any imbalance in this in The Quran, this would make it logically/conceptually inconsistent and therefore would be tantamount to an internal contradiction. This is unacceptable.

It advises to use discernment, clarify, investigate information before acting upon it [see 4: 94, 17:36, 49:6] but there is no mention of doing this in 4:34 before allegedly beating/striking one's wife, which would be unusual.

Even during open war, believers are ordered to be compassionate, offer protection if requested, not transgress limits, and this is with people who were potentially trying to kill them [see 2: 190, 9:6, 16:126, 42:41-42] so to even suggest having more compassion in this case than with one's own wife would be unusual.

4: 34 implies husband wants to reconcile, proven by him undertaking a series of conflict-resolution steps and "if you fear", thus it is unlikely he would do anything that would harm his chances of achieving this goal, i.e. to beat his wife.

2: 229 addresses the community and shows there is potentially blame if something is taken away from the wife in terms of dower, unless they BOTH agree. This and other places in The Quran tell us it is a sin do so, but if we assume beating is allowed then how is the community meant to be satisfied the wife did indeed agree to give up some of her dower of her own freewill? Quite simply, they cant. Thus, it is unlikely The Quran would recommend a course of action which makes its other principles hard or perhaps impossible to confirm or follow. It is therefore highly unlikely beating would be allowed. Compulsion/statement under duress/coercion is clearly invalid and rejected by The Quran [16:106] thus to somehow allow for it here would be tantamount to contradiction. Similarly, when it says "the righteous women are obedient/dutiful" in 4: 34, it cannot refer to a situation in which the woman is beaten or physically threatened into obeying, as this would be a false righteousness and thus invalid.

[3:134 The ones who spend in prosperity and adversity, and who repress anger, and who pardon the people; God loves the good doers.](#)

[5:8 ...do not let hatred of a people get in the way of being just.](#)

Meaning, even if you hate a person, still be just, which means if the wife in 4:34 is less than "hated" this means one must be just in the lesser situation. Anything to the

contrary would be a conceptual inconsistency. Also if one has to live/consort with kindness with a wife even if he dislikes her [4:19], then if he likes her it would make sense he would have to be even nicer.

Post divorce during interim period 65:6 "...and do not harm/afflict them to straiten/distress/hardness on them..."

What this tells us (and all present English translations) is that during the interim period, a husband is forbidden from harming, hurting, injuring or using force against her, making hardness/distress/difficulty on her etc while for a woman who wants to stay married, it is permissible for her husband to beat her, according to traditional understanding! A logical and conceptual inconsistency.

Further, if 4:34 allows wife beating then this means when The Quran says do not straiten them, or reconcile with them to cause harm etc, this implies to do such a thing would be to commit a wrongdoing thus would give the wife a legitimate cause for divorce or compensation, i.e. The Quran recommends a course of action which provides women with a valid reason for divorce, giving a logical and conceptual inconsistency. To deny this would require some artificial demarcation to be made-up of what injustice or unfair treatment is and why the wife cannot seek requital. Interestingly, in the alleged sayings of prophet Muhammad (i.e. Traditional *Ahadith*) he is said to react exactly in this way and gives permission for the wife to retaliate in the same manner upon hearing a husband struck his wife. Of course, the traditional accounts dismiss his reaction by saying he was wrong in this and 4:34 was revealed showing that a husband could apparently beat his wife. Suspect stories like these are often found in Traditional *Ahadith* when unusual (i.e. non-Quranic) beliefs/practices are put forward, e.g. kissing of the black stone is extremely unusual for a strictly monotheistic anti-idolatry faith such as *Islam* but to explain this practice away the narrator says he wouldn't have done it himself if he never saw the prophet do it, or when Abu Huraira tells Umar of the testimony of faith in which he includes Muhammad's name Umar knocks him to the floor for uttering such a thing but then Abu Huraira produces sandals from the prophet implying this is his evidence for the legitimacy of what he is saying. There are many similarly dubious reported sayings in the Traditional *Hadith* books.

Is it a coincidence that the other more obvious examples in The Quran of a person DRB to another person (2:73 and 38:44) have been severely mistranslated and the distortion just so happens to favour the meaning of striking/beating? In a misogynist environment, which The Quran was revealed in, it is possible that not so long after initial revelation the interpretation of these verses became twisted in favour of returning such justification for men to oppress women. The evidence of the do not beat one's wife mixed within the traditional narrations/*hadith* shows possibly that they were not able to eliminate the evidence against it completely.

If The Quran is as it claims: complete [6:114-115, 18:10], clear [2:99, 6:126, 7:52, 11:1, 44:2], fully detailed [12:111, 16:89], contains all necessary examples [17:12, 18:54] etc then if DRB means beat/strike in 4:34, then it isn't clarified at all, i.e. with what? where? severity? limits? Neglecting to mention these things would be highly unusual for The Quran. Is there any other example of a physical punishment like this which is not clarified? Is there any other example of a physical punishment that is issued by individuals without evidence rather than through a court/authority with evidence?

Another argument is 41:53 etc as it says we can verify the truth of what The Quran says in the world around us, but what evidence is there of effective conflict resolution in marriage by beating until agreement or symbolically striking with a small stick? (as is one interpretation amongst Traditional commentators, first put forward by Shafi about 200 hundred years after prophet Muhammad's death) Further, according to the

sequence in 4:34, the steps imply an escalation, thus if DRB is symbolic striking (as some suggest) this makes little sense as to how this would resolve the situation, and why it is an escalation. Even if this method could be shown to work, at most, it could only work in a minority of cases.

O you who believe, it is not lawful/allowed for you to inherit the women forcibly/unwillingly, **and nor that you hinder/prevent/constrain/straiten them to take away some of what you gave them** unless they commit* a clear lewdness. And live/consort with them in kindness, so if you dislike them, then perhaps you may dislike something and God makes in it much good. [4:19]

And if you desire to exchange a mate in place of another, and you have given one of them a large amount, then do not take anything from it. Would you take it by falsehood/slander and a clear sin? [4:20]

*imperfect, i.e. unless they commit (in future) a clear lewdness.

4:20 proves that if a husband wishes to replace one wife with another, they cannot take away anything of the dower. This reinforces and proves 4:19 refers to making life difficult for the wife, so the husband can take back a part of what he has given her of the dower and the only way that can be done is if the couple agree that they may not uphold God's limits [2:229] or the wife releases herself [60:10]. So this verse refers to the husband treating his wife badly in some way so that she agrees to do either of these, which of course would be unjust. This causes a severe problem for the possibility that in 4:34 it means wife beating, as this would be a clear contradiction in The Quran. To further reinforce this understanding, the verse clearly states itself that it is about a husband being with a wife he may dislike, but there may be good that he does not realise. The next verse then discusses divorce which the next logical step for a husband who dislikes his wife.

Interestingly, traditional explanations from Ibn Kathir, Al-Jalalayn and others insert their own interpretation and render it as "... and nor prevent them (from marrying others)" and "what you gave them" refers to what women were bequeathed in an inheritance by their deceased husbands. Not only is this an absurd extrapolation, it makes no sense because the right to take something away from what was given to the wife in case of clear lewdness is the right of the husband only (i.e. the one who gave the dower), not others. Most translators do not opt for this absurd interpretation. It is possible this unusual interpretation is given to cancel out the fact that a husband cannot make difficulty for his wife to take away what he gave her, i.e. must treat her fairly in marriage, even if he dislikes her. This more proper interpretation would of course cause problems in understanding *idriboo* as "beat/strike". In any case, in a situation of an unloved wife who is prevented from marrying others (i.e. not divorced properly), then the resolution to this situation is already given in 58:1-4.

Logically, if a partner is not allowed to straiten/constrain his wife to take something away from what he gave her (unless she commits clear lewdness), then if he fears or suspects lewdness, he must do less, NOT more, e.g. beat. To do so would be a contradiction.

And if you have divorced the women, and they have reached their required interim period, **then either you remain together with fairness/kindness***, or part ways **with fairness/kindness**. And do not retain them harmfully that you transgress; **whoever does so is doing wickedness to his soul**; and do not take God's revelations lightly. And remember God's blessings towards you, and what was sent down to you of the scripture and the wisdom, He warns you with it. And be aware of God and know that God is Knowledgeable in all things. [2:231]

*Arabic: *maruf* "honourable, known/recognised as good, befitting, fairness, kindness".

This shows one cannot reconcile with them to harm them, but somehow are we meant

to believe the traditional interpretation that prior to divorce, it is allowed to harm them by beating, as in 4:34? In which case, The Quran would be saying a wife who has been officially divorced then the couple gets back together, should be treated better than a wife not divorced?! Where is the logic/consistency in this? There is none, and thus such an understanding of 4:34 is problematic.

And when you (plural) divorced the women, then they reached their term/time, then do not prevent/hinder/constrain/straiten them (F) that they marry their partners/mates, if they mutually agreed/accepted between them with the kindness/fairness... [2:232]

Some say the underlined part refers to 'former husbands' other say it is 'other partners', some translations do not clarify.

If "other partners/mates", the reasoning is as follows:

It is plural throughout.

If it did mean former husbands, seems like this scenario would be covered in the previous verses.

Since one doesn't, as far as I'm aware, "*nikah*/marry" their former husbands at the end of the term time, this is an unusual usage UNLESS it means after they officially separate, i.e. two witnesses make it final, THEN they wish to get back together later, i.e. remarry. But then this would make those doing the preventing/hindering/straitening other people which doesn't fit the flow of the verse, i.e. makes the "and if you (plural) divorced the women" at the start redundant and potentially misleading. I say this because if the husband mutually agrees on remarrying then he is obviously not the one doing the preventing/hindering/straitening, leaving the only option to be: others.

Why wait till end of their time/term, and then say the above? That would imply one must wait till the end of the term time before reconciliation with their former husbands. Unless it is just saying that even after the end of the period, doesn't mean it is over for all time, they can still get back together, even though this is mentioned in the previous verses so is an unlikely interpretation.

The following verse 2:233 refers to mothers who have been divorced, implying a continuation of subject, i.e. situations that might occur AFTER divorce.

The "*wa-itha*" (and when) at the start of 2:232 implies it is discussing a different situation, not the same one.

"their *azwaj*" can mean the female's spouse/husband/mate/partner BUT if they are divorced, seems unusual to refer to them as "theirs", and obviously, he is not her husband before re-marriage. So either way the more appropriate translation is "their mates/partners".

The structure of 2:231 is very similar and refers to the husbands doing the divorcing, not an inserted unmentioned group of others. If it meant others, then it could have been added to 2:231.

The reason I bring up this clarification is that The Quran implies mutual agreement is required between the two before marriage, giving an equal footing to each side. Thus the likelihood of any male-female dominance interpretation elsewhere is reduced and/or eliminated. It is interesting to note that traditional commentators (exclusively male) often opt for the interpretation that favours men. It is not uncommon to find a repeated pattern of misogynistic interpretations amongst translators, thus it is fairly clear that this was the environment the early interpretations were exposed to and thus based on. In such a situation, it makes it more likely that 4:34 has been interpreted to mean beat/strike even though the evidence clearly suggests otherwise. In fact, no traditional commentator that I have read uses The Quran itself to justify such a view, which is very noteworthy.

"And he entered the city unexpectedly, without being noticed by the people. He found

in it two men who were fighting, one was from his own tribe, and the other was from his enemy's. So the one who was from his own tribe called on him for help against his enemy. Moses then punched/struck him (fa wakazahu musaa), and killed him. He said: This is from the work of the devil; he is an enemy that clearly misleads. [28: 15]

It is interesting to notice here that the verb '*daraba*' is not used at all when it is obviously about a physical act of hitting/striking. It is not "*fa darabahu musa*" but "*fa wakazahu musa*".

Other Arabic words for beat: n-b-d, kh-f-q, h-z-m, r-d (as verbs) and "rfqat, trqa" as nouns, j-l-d 24:2, *latama*, *rafasa*, ha-sh-sha, *sakkat*: slapped [51:29], l-t-h (which means hit lightly with the hand, although this word is not used in The Quran).

What if the man is too weak to beat his wife? Is this man apparently disadvantaged by The Quran in such a case? Not to mention, some females can easily beat up males. The traditional/common interpretation artificially inserts an inequality in that a woman apparently cannot beat/strike her man. As far as I'm aware, no explanation for this is given by most (perhaps all) translators. Some might suggest that for a wife to strike her husband is ill-advised because generally men are stronger than women thus he could retaliate and harm her more, but this could equally be applied to the man! These days, a woman simply needs to take a baseball bat to him in his sleep. Perhaps they will then argue that is why it suggests the husband to abandon them in bed first! In any case, many women can beat up men easily, so I do not think this reasoning has any validity, or at least not enough to be a point for consideration.

Counter evil with good [2:148, 28:54, 13:22, 16:126, 23:96, 41:34] - thus counteracting suspected evil with physical harm would be contradictory, if done in 4:34.

If DRB in 4:34 means "beat/strike", this would be the only example of husband as: judge, jury and executioner; the only example of guilty verdict based on a fear/suspicion; the only clear example of non-equivalent punishment; the only example of punishment for no actual/proven crime etc. These are fundamental concepts core to The Quran and cannot be put aside, unless they can be explained away without causing logical/conceptual inconsistencies.

If it is only the husband who fears disloyalty/uprising/infidelity, or even if he is sure of it, and if there are no witnesses/evidence, then he must follow the procedure in 24:6-9 and cannot take it upon himself to administer any punishment. Anything to the contrary would be an internal inconsistency in The Quran.

In 65:1, it clearly states that the husband can only evict the wife from the home if she has committed a clear/evident lewdness/immorality (*fahish mubayyin*), thus logically one must do less punishment for a suspected immorality as in 4:34. Thus, the only logical position left for the traditional/common understanding is to say wife battery is less harsh than eviction, thus logically acceptable. Of course, this subjective opinion has no basis in The Quran, and is a forced position resulting from their view.

The Quran does not recommend us to solve our conflicts by violence but peacefully when possible. Is there any other example in The Quran in which non-violence is met with violence?

IF the traditional view is if beating doesn't work, then it moves onto next step which is arbitration this would imply the authority decides upon "ok, you have beat them enough, we feared no reconciliation, now it is time to appoint arbitration!". How is this even practically possible? Do they inspect the beatings? Do they give a time limit on beating? Do they take the husband's word for it when it comes to how much beating is enough and how long for and if it was done in an appropriate manner? These questions are of course impractical, unenforceable and somewhat nonsensical.

The traditional suggested sequence of events follows a somewhat unusual pattern in that:

abandon them in the bedchamber ---> reduces physical contact/interaction
'beat/strike' them ---> adds to the physical contact/interaction

Now let us look at the verses discussing the relationship between male and female, to see if wife beating fits:

O people, we created you from the same male and female, and rendered you distinct peoples and tribes that you may recognize one another. The best among you in the sight of God is the most God-conscious/righteous. God is Knowledgeable, Aware.

[49:13]

And from His signs is that He created for you mates from yourselves that you may reside with them, and He placed between you affection and mercy. In that are signs for a people who reflect. [30:21]

"...They are a garment for you and you are a garment for them..." [2:187]

And those who say: "Our Lord, grant us from our mates and our progeny what will be the comfort of our eyes, and make us righteous role models." [25:74]

And the believing men and women, they are allies to one another. They order good and deter from doing wrong... [9:71]

Recompense for a crime/sin/injury is its equivalence, but whoever pardons and makes right, then his reward is upon God. He does not like the wrongdoers/unjust. [42:40]
...oppression is worse than murder... [2:191, 2:217]

Not equal are the good and the bad response. You shall resort to the one which is better. Thus, the one who used to be your enemy* may become your best friend.

[41:34]

O you who believe, from among your spouses and your children are enemies* to you; so beware of them. And if you pardon, and overlook, and forgive, then God is Forgiver, Merciful. [64:14]

*Ayn-Dal-Waw

These verses show that with an enemy one should resort to action that is better, and even if one considers a spouse an enemy, one should forgive etc. Thus, if we give an example of two wives: one in whom fears uprising/disloyalty, and the other is considered an enemy, it is recommended to forgive the enemy wife whilst the suspected wife should be beaten, according to the traditional/common understanding. This would mean a harsher punishment for a lesser offence, giving another conceptual inconsistency.

Examples of unrighteous/rebellious wives in The Quran, such as the wives of Noah and Lot but no mention of striking/beating them is given.

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The traditionally accepted view amongst Muslims is that verse 4:34 allows wife beating. Within this understanding, there are various shades of interpretation, depending on school of thought, sect or scholar, e.g. one can only beat lightly, it is only a last resort and thoroughly disproved of, can only be done in a certain way, can only be done once, it is a symbolic beating not causing actual harm etc. Some have even used this verse and traditional sources to sanction wife beating for other than what the context of the verse discusses.

We will now review the evidence FOR wife beating:

1) Word meaning and preposition usage: the word in question is "*idriboo*" (Arabic root: Dad-Ra-Ba) and specific meanings are indicated by way of prepositions. Thus, it is often claimed that DRB + object (e.g. person) only means one thing and that is strike/hit/beat.

Is this really true? Based on part 1, as discussed previously, let us look to The Quran:

- there is not a single occurrence of DRB in which "beat" is the likely meaning.
- when DRB+object is used with no prepositions, it NEVER means to physically hit/strike.
- even when body parts are mentioned as what to DRB with or what to do DRB to/upon (e.g. 8:12, 8:50, 18:11, 24:31, 37:93, 47:4, 47:27) it doesn't mean a physical hit/strike, or at least there is not one clear example showing it does.
- when used with an object with no prepositions (e.g. Jesus, parable, truth, falsehood, the captives, fronts/back, a dry path) DRB always means "to put/show forth" and using a literal strike/hit/beat meaning in these occurrences would not work.
- the only times it can possibly mean a literal hit/strike is when the preposition "*bi*" (with/by) is used.

Thus, this claim is only based on a wrong or poor interpretation of some verses of The Quran, most notably 2:73, 8:12, 8:50, 38:44, 47:4, and 47:27.

2) Early understandings: early interpretations/*tafsirs*, which were written by males, say it means "beat/strike/scourge", e.g. see altafsir.com, qtafsir.com

All base their understanding on traditional narrations/*ahadith*. It is very important to note that NO commentator who puts forward the meaning of beat/strike uses The Quran itself as evidence for their view.

With regard to the origin of 4:34, various well-known commentators such as Tabari, Ibn Kathir, Razi, Baidawi, Qurtubi have different variations surrounding the context in which it was revealed, e.g. because of whom, or which incident led to it. Tabari and Razi reference a traditional narration/*hadith* for their reason, but its chain of transmission does not go back to prophet Muhammad or even a companion of his (source: qa.sunnipath.com/issue_view.asp?id=612). Interestingly, nearly all commentators mention prophet Muhammad initially ruled in favour of the wife in cases of wife beating, but was apparently over ruled when 4:34 was revealed, to which he allegedly said "I wanted one thing, but God wanted another". Qurtubi even states this was the reason 20:114 was revealed, yet other sources cite chapter 20 to be earlier revelation than chapter 4.

Ibn Abbas (alleged companion of prophet Muhammad) gave his view on the severity of hitting, and said it is as with a small stick, e.g. *siwak*. The famous commentator, Al Shafi (about 200 hundred years after prophet Muhammad's death), interpreted it as a "*miswak*" which is a small stick use for cleaning the teeth. Another famous commentator, Razi, quotes another early jurist who said it can be a coiled scarf (*mindil malfuf*). It is hard to understand how striking in such a symbolic manner would help bring about resolution however. The very fact that early commentators showed variation in meaning strongly suggests there was no coherent view.

al-Ghazali, a famous commentator, mentions suspecting a wife of something based on conjecture is sinful! And when referring to 4:34 he mentions wife beating (albeit not

harshly or leaving a mark) but also mentions that the wife should be separated gradually, in increasing steps, and even cites an example in which the prophet apparently separated from his wife for a month. The key point is that even though Ghazali mentions the process of separating from the wife gradually with respect to 4:34, he somehow interjects wife beating even though this has nothing to do with separating gradually. Also, if the wife is suspected of doing something disloyal not in the husband's presence then leaving her alone for 30 days doesn't seem to make much sense. Also, a husband's duty of maintenance of the wife/family would still be present, thus abandoning them for such a period may not be practical.

Interestingly, if we correlate this traditional interpretation with the implication in 4:34 being that anything other than or after advisement is implied to be seeking a way against them, and 2:226-227, that could indicate why, in theory, step 2 (abandoning them in bed) could be limited in time. Interestingly, they apply no such limit for *idriboo* them. Thus, according to this traditional position, step 2, the lesser harsh step is limited in time, yet the more harsh step, i.e. if it means beating/striking, is not limited in time. This would result in a logical and conceptual inconsistency in their interpretation of The Quran. Since there is no time limit implied for *idriboo*, this implies it cannot be a step needing a time limit but possibly considered a way against them, i.e. it is not an ongoing action but a one-off action. Thus, even if this interpretation of period of abandonment was adopted, DRB would fit more in line with "indicate/cite, point out, declare, put/show forth" them.

It could also be argued that separating oneself from one's wife, except in the house, actually goes against some traditional *ahadith*. Unless Ghazali meant in the house only, but this would render his interpretation a little odd and impractical.

(section 9, page 37: www.scribd.com/doc/6008602/Ihya-Ulumuddin-Vol-02-the-Book-of-Worldly-Usages)

It should also be noted that these commentators also give variations in understanding on other aspects of this verse, i.e. there is no coherent view. Also, not all early commentaries were reviewed as there are many (at least several hundred*), thus only the more popular ones were selected.

*source: www.idc.nl based on the British Library Arabic script collections.

Tabari, Ibn Kathir, Razi, Qurtubi: source:

www.maktabah.org/index.php/quran/tafsir.html

Baidawi: source: www.islamweb.net/ver2/archive/showayatafseer.php

3) Traditional Narrations (*ahadith*):

The most commonly cited traditional narration/*hadith* about wife beating references the prophet Muhammad's alleged speech during his farewell *hajj*:

Guillaume's translation of Ibn Ishaq's "*Sirat Rasulallah*":

"You have rights over your wives, and they have rights over you. You have the right that they should not defile your bed and that they should not behave with open unseemliness. If they do, God allows you to put them in separate rooms and to beat them, but not with severity. If they refrain from these things and obey you, they have right to their food and clothing with kindness. Lay injunctions on women kindly, for they are your wards having no control of their persons."

"The Life of Muhammad", Oxford, 1955, page 651. (Translation of one of the earliest accounts of prophet Muhammad, apparently written about 150 years after his death)

Ibn Kathir:

"And fear Allah in women, for they are your aides, and their duties towards you are that your beds should not be shared with someone you dislike. Therefore, if they

disobey you, beat them lightly (*dharbun ghayru nubrah*)..."

Sahih Muslim, narrated on the authority of Jabir, who had quoted the Prophet as saying in his farewell *hajj*.

Qurtubi:

In a hadith in Sahih Muslim, narrated on the authority of Jabir Al Taweel, the Prophet said: "fear Allah with your wives. You were given them by Allah's provision, and you were entrusted with their private parts by Allah's word. You have the right that they do not allow anyone you dislike into your bed, but if they do, then beat them but not severely...".

Al Tirmithi (no. 276) reported that Amro bin Al Ahwas had attended the Farewell *hajj* and heard the messenger of Allah say: "Lo! My last recommendation to you is that you should treat women well. Truly they are your helpmates, and you have no right over them beyond that - except if they commit a manifest indecency (*fahisha mubina*). If they do, then refuse to share their beds and beat them without indecent violence (*fadribuhunna darban ghayra mubarrih*). Then, if they obey you, do not show them hostility any longer. Lo! you have a right over your women and they have a right over you. Your right over your women is that they not allow whom you hate to enter your bed nor your house. While their right over them is that you treat them excellently in their garb and provision."

(source one: hadith.al-islam.com/Search/AdvSearch.asp and two:

www.maktabah.org/index.php/component/content/article/47-hadith-collections/286-sunantirmidhi.html?directory=71)

Notes:

Different versions of this narration exist, which is problematic when trying to draw solid conclusions, but not unexpected when such narrations are based on hearsay recorded generations after the event.

Two versions discuss beating them because of committing "*fahisha mubina*" (open/clear/evident immorality/lewdness/indecency), whilst the other two do not mention this. It should be strongly noted that "*fahisha mubina*" is NOT the context of 4:34 in which the husband fears (imperfect) such a thing, i.e. not open/clear/evident. This clearly implies, according to these two narrations, that in 4:34 a husband cannot beat his wife, which is the opposite of the traditional/common understanding! If a verse had to be chosen which most closely resembles the content of this narration it would be 4:15-19, and therefore any punishment may have been in reference to that situation. Some commentators interpret "*fahisha mubina*" in this case as "adultery" (qa.sunnipath.com/issue_view.asp?id=612), but if this is the case, then beating is not the punishment, but lashes are according to The Quran. Thus, this may have been a reference to that punishment, i.e. lash but not with severity. Interestingly, in Classical Arabic dictionaries, DRB used on its own in this way principally means to strike with a weapon/object, e.g. with a whip, which matches this context. Also, some commentators think that stoning to death is the punishment for adultery (even though it is not in The Quran), but this opinion does not match the above narrations. Some consider the verses sanctioning stoning to death to have been eaten by a goat, and that is why they are not found in The Quran. Some consider the punishment for adultery/fornication to have been abrogated by later verses, e.g. first it was confinement to the home, then it was lashing, then a combination of lashing and stoning depending on situation, i.e. a gradual implementation to ease transition. There is no coherent view amongst commentators.

Qurtubi and Tabari both mention tying women up in the home in relation to 4:34, even though this is not mentioned in the verse. The only potential correlation of restricting women in their homes could be because of proven *fahish*/indecency mentioned in 4:15, and again in prophet Muhammad's alleged speech in his farewell *hajj* it makes

reference to such *fahish*. Ibn Kathir also makes mention of a husband allowed to annoy his wife if she commits a proven *fahish*, which could be related. Thus, there seems to be an element of overlap in interpretation, which can result in some confusion as to which verses from The Quran these traditional narrations refer to or what they have been applied to. In fact, a strong case could be made that there has been a misapplication of these traditional narrations, and if corrected, would perhaps resolve the many problems in this interpretation.

The traditional narrations/*ahadith* contain a mix of narrations: some alleged sayings state that prophet Muhammad disapproved of beating one's wife in any way whilst on other occasions he apparently allowed it, some say beat but not on the face, some not severely, sometimes stating husbands who do such a thing are not the best among the believers, sometimes saying the best are those who treat their women/family well, Aisha claims Muhammad did not hit a woman but reports in another narration he struck her and caused her pain etc.

Such variation is common amongst hearsay recorded generations after an event, and is not equal to dealing with one consistent source [Quran, 4:82, 39:29]. At best, traditional narrations are seen as a mix of truth and falsehood, hence weak and strong classification.

If we assume these narrations somewhat resemble actual discussion of the time, there does seem to be a mix of opinion, or at least one can say there is no coherent view. It is possible some at the time wished to interpret 4:34 to mean hit/beat and favoured this view, or this view became dominant shortly afterwards amidst the misogynist environment which The Quran was revealed in.

Some references are shown below for the traditional narrations (readable online by adding specific reference at the end of link below):

www.usc.edu/schools/college/crcc/engagement/resources/texts/muslim/hadith/

abudawud/011.sat.html#011.2137 (do not strike her on the face)
abudawud/011.sat.html#011.2138 (do not beat her)
abudawud/011.sat.html#011.2139 (do not beat them)
abudawud/011.sat.html#011.2141 (do not beat, then given permission, but such men are not the best)
abudawud/011.sat.html#011.2142 (man will not be asked why he beat his wife)
bukhari/073.sbt.html#008.073.068 (negative towards wife beating)
www.tafsir.com/default.asp?sid=68&tid=54734 (Aisha says Muhammad never hit a woman)
bukhari/072.sbt.html#007.072.715 (Muhammad strikes Aisha)
muslim/004.smt.html#004.2127 (as above)
muslim/009.smt.html#009.3506 (striking women in Muhammad's presence)
muslim/009.smt.html#009.3526 (marrying a wife beater not recommended)
muslim/009.smt.html#009.3527 (as above)
bukhari/082.sbt.html#008.082.828 (Abu Bakr, 1st Caliph, strikes Aisha violently)
bukhari/062.sbt.html#007.062.132 (wife flogging vs slave flogging)
abudawud/001.sat.html#001.0142 (wife beating vs slave beating)

"The most perfect of believers in faith are those who are the finest in manners and most gentle toward their wives." Referenced *hadith*/narration in Imam Ghazzali's *Ihya Ulum-Id-Din*.

"The best of you is the one who is best to his wife, and I am the best of you to my wives." Narrated by al-Tirmidhi (3895) and Ibn Majaah (1977); classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in *Saheeh al-Tirmidhi*.

Source: (www.ghazali.org/works/marriage.htm)

4) Classical Arabic Dictionaries: it is often claimed they give the meaning of hit/strike/beat for same or similar usage. This is only part of the story however.

Firstly, it is important to note a distinction, under the root entry: a common meaning of DRB given in Classical Arabic dictionaries is to strike with an instrument (e.g. sword, whip, cane), if it is used alone (i.e. with no prepositions/where/what/how). This seems to be its meaning by default in this construction. Interestingly, this provides a possible reason as to why some early jurists may have interpreted DRB in 4:34 to mean hit with a small stick, toothbrush stick, scarf (i.e. they needed an instrument to DRB with in this construction).

In the entry for DRB, none reference 4:34 of The Quran and therefore do not give the meaning of beat/hit/strike in this case.

In the first Classical Arabic Dictionary: Kitab Al Ayn by Khaleel Ibn Ahmad, no entries mean "to hit/strike"; some mean, indirectly: to strike with a sword (reference: quran434.com/resources/Kitab-Al-Ayn-DaRaBa.html). This could imply the meaning of literally/physically striking with/without an instrument was not a common meaning for the time, or at least not the most common, and only later did it become so, as recorded in later dictionaries.

Conversely, WKZ (also used in The Quran), signifies "to punch, to strike" with no instruments by default, but can be used with an instrument if specified.

Ibn Manzour in Lisan al Arab lists what I think is an important entry: "DRB: used for any action except a few; he DRB in trade, he DRB in the earth, he DRB in the way of God" etc. This implies the word DRB had a very wide application in usage. Similar to this is also stated in Kitab al Ayn.

The second and third verb forms of DRB are intensive and reciprocal, thus they better signify "to beat" and "to exchange blows, to fight" respectively.

To beat is repeated blows/hits/strikes, hence this meaning should be seen more as an interpretation not an actual meaning or true/literal translation. Lane's Lexicon states "*daraba*" on its own means to strike once. It is possible this is also one of the reasons some saw it as a symbolic strike with a stick since by itself it can mean this and it is only once. Similarly, the later Arabic dictionary al-Munjid restricts its usage to instruments, and also states it means to strike once.

Even though Lane's Lexicons lists "beat" as a meaning for DRB it does not provide a comparable example to 4:34 in which it means "hit/strike/beat". In fact, no Classical Arabic dictionary provides such an example. The only comparable example found was in the famous grammar book "al kitab" by Sibawayh (who was a student of Khaleel Ibn Ahmed) in which it is written:

اللّٰهُزَيْدًا ضَرَبَ عَبْدُ / Abdullah struck Zaid

However, due to this word's meaning, in this context the default meaning would be struck with sword in battle/war, e.g. killed. It is not explained as beat/hit.

The dictionaries seem to suggest the meaning "strike/beat" does not stand for "daraba" by itself. Every strike or "darba" has a different word, depending on what part to strike and using what. The verb "daraba" by itself means to strike with a sword, cane or whip; and this is from all arabic dictionaries. That is most likely why they say in the beginning of the entry: al darb: known (i.e. its meaning is known, thus it is not explained). There

is DaaRaBa (form III): whip each other; a scorpion darabat (form I)= sting; a wound= hurts; dariiba (passive participle): whatever is struck with a sword. The word "known" implies it is what's known to linguists, thus, based on the evidence in the entries: DaRaBa on its own means to strike with a sword/stick as in a quarrel or in war. The abbaside poet (al-Mutannabi) says:

Transliteration: wa murhafun sirtu bain al- ja7falaini bihi **** 7atta Darabtu wa mawju-l-mawti yaltaTimu
(on a light, slim "horse" I passed between two big armies until I (darabtu) amongst the waves of death)

In Abraham's example in 37:93 it is DRB with his hand (if taken literally), thus DRB by itself does not mean with the hand. Also, in the Classical Arabic dictionary *Lisaan al Arab* and *Taj al Arus* it states "daraba biyadihi ila kaza : ahwa" meaning "he stretched his hand towards such a thing (e.g. to take it)" or "point/indicate with hand to it", and the entry explains "daraba bi yadihi" as similar to "throw the hand (ahwa)" [e.g. verb used in verse 22:31 : the wind threw him far away (tahwa); and verse 53:1 and the star when it goes down/vanishes (hawa)]. This is similar to the analysis of 37:93 presented in part one.

Under other root entries, the use of some words are explained by the dictionary authors using DRB to mean hit/strike/slap however, for example:

"he STT him with a stick" this is given the meaning "he DRB him with a stick"
"he SML him with a stick" this is given the meaning "he DRB him with a stick"
"he SQL him with a stick" this is given the meaning "he DRB him with a stick"
"he LBJ him with a stick" this is given the meaning "he DRB him with a stick"
"he LBJ his self to the earth" this is given the meaning "he DRB his self to the earth"
"he SKK him" this is given the meaning "he DRB him"
"he SKK him with a sword" this is given the meaning "he DRB him"
"he LTG him with his hand" this is given the meaning "he DRB him"
"he ZLG him with a stick" this is given the meaning "he DRB him with a stick"

Interestingly, under the entry of *nushuz* it only cites the part of *nushuz*: when a woman rejects her husband. It continues: "he is also *nashez* as per verse 4:128 also, and if he stays away from her, beat/harmed her (*darabaha*)". This is interesting because if DRB is cited under *nushuz*, then if we apply this meaning to The Quran, it will cause a contradiction if "beat her" is chosen in 4:34, i.e. God suggests a solution to the husband to prevent a marriage ending, i.e. the steps in 4:34, but this step (e.g. DRB/beat) would give the wife a legitimate reason for ending the marriage according to 4:128 as his behaviour is *nushuz*. In other words, God's suggested solution to prevent a marriage ending gives the women a legitimate reason for ending the marriage. Of course, this is highly unlikely. This information can be found in both *Lisaan al Arab* and *Al-Sihah fil lugha*.

All in all, it would seem that DRB is an expansive root, with the first form used to reflect a wide range of meanings. One of these meanings could very well be "to hit/strike another person" as demonstrated by their explanation of words from other roots, however with its wide variation in meaning, somewhat conflicting information, no specific reference to 4:34 and effectively zero comparable examples it is far from conclusive that this is its meaning in this verse. In such a situation, The Quran should be used as the criterion which clarifies usage and meaning.

Classical Arabic Dictionaries (in chronological order)

kitab al ayn - khalil ibn ahmad (~718-786)

Kitab al Dajmharah (~838-933)

Makayis al Lughah (~1004)

Al Sihah (~1003)

Lisan al arab (13th century)

al qamus al muhit (14th century)

Source: www.studyquran.co.uk/ArabicDictionaries.htm and www.baheth.info/index.jsp

Part 4

Summary with conclusion

Note: Before I begin this summary, I would like to state that I did not expect to discover what I did when I undertook this study. In fact, the meaning of "put/show forth, declare/cite/indicate" for 4:34 was a meaning I had read, but did not seriously consider. I only did so about halfway through my study, when the evidence began to accumulate and by the end it had become overwhelming, and I was forced to reject any and all previous understandings that I may have had. I simply could not ignore what The Quran was telling me. For the purposes of full disclosure, it should be noted that at one point I did consider "strike/beat" as a possibility, but that was until I did a complete re-analysis of the occurrences of DRB in The Quran.

A detailed analysis of every occurrence of DRB in The Quran showed there is not one clear occurrence of "beat", and in almost all cases, this meaning is problematic or would not make sense.

No Classical Arabic dictionary gives "beat" in an example without specifying where/what/how/etc. They do not provide one example in which DRB appears with no where/what/how meaning anything other than "strike (with sword/whip/cane, kill in battle)". None reference 4:34 at all.

When The Quran uses DRB to possibly mean a literal strike/hit the preposition "bi" (with/by) is always used in the context. This subtle distinction may not have been fully appreciated or suppressed in a misogynist environment or lost over the years. Please note the significant time gap between the first Classical Arabic dictionary and later ones, thus the meaning of this word could have shifted over the years which is very common in a living language. For example, today it is quite common for Arabic speakers to use DRB to mean "hit/punch/smack/strike" without specifics/preposition, even though this usage is unheard of in Classical Arabic dictionaries, thus convincing an Arabic speaker of today that DRB could mean something other than this can be difficult.

If DRB is taken to mean "beat/hit/strike" in 4:34 it causes significant problems logically and conceptually, and in a few instances causes contradiction within The Quran.

The internal example of 58:1-4 provides perfect explanation and correlation for 4:128-129, and also 4:34-35. All other evidence within The Quran reinforces this finding.

All examples of DRB with a direct object and no prepositions mean "put/show forth", providing internal consistency of usage. And when used in the same way as 4:34, i.e. applied to a person in 43:57 and 2:73 it means the exact same thing. In 43:57 Jesus is the second object of the verb DuRiBa, and in this verse it is in the perfect passive form meaning the object received the action expressed in the verb, i.e. Jesus received DRB, i.e. Jesus was put/shown forth / cited/indicated (as an example) by those disputing. In 43:57 "mathala" could be considered an adverbial accusative that names or modifies the action of the verb. So the type of "darab" of the object "Jesus" is that of an "example". As we can clearly see a literal/physical striking of Jesus is nonsensical, and if we remove this modification of the verb, this shows when applied to a person as the object DRB on its own means to cite/indicate or put/show forth. A perfect match with 4:34 and 2:73.

There is inconsistency in early understandings regarding the origin of the verse, its interpretation, and significant overlap with other verses etc but it could be argued they agree on the basic points. Not all early commentaries have been reviewed, only the more well known ones. The evidence suggests that traditional narrations have been

incorrectly associated with 4:34, and are more suited to 4:15-19.

Clear evidence exists in the traditional narrations/*ahadith* AND Classical Arabic dictionaries showing that if "beat/hit" is chosen it would cause contradiction amongst these sources.

In a sheer balance of probabilities as to which view is correct, it is clear The Quran says one thing, and non-Quranic sources (traditional narrations, early commentators, Arabic dictionaries) suggest another albeit with variation/inconsistency.

Lastly, if 4:34 meant to clearly mean "beat/strike" why does The Quran use one of the most multiple meaning words in the Arabic language? Similarly, one could ask, if it was not meant to mean "beat/strike" why use a word that could have this implication? I believe the reason for this is two-fold: 1) only a careful study of The Quran leads to deciding which one is the most likely choice 2) it is one of many internal distinguishing mechanisms contained within The Quran. By the latter point, I mean many read The Quran and use it to justify their crimes, whilst others can read The Quran and use it as a force for good. Some examples:

The oft quoted "kill non-believers" verses in which the context is never considered as it always refers to self-defence and never transgressing the law of equivalence etc. Some use these verses to justify murder whilst others use it to discredit The Quran and/or *islam* - neither side reads the context, giving an insincere approach, bringing out their true colours.

The verse which recommends us to give the excess when we give [2:219] which to those naturally stingy/insincere will use to justify withholding and giving less and whilst others who are naturally righteous/sincere will know exactly what to give: that which is truly due in an honourable manner.

When verses discuss women's dress code, emphasising modesty, some will interpret that to the utmost extreme and ask women to fully cover up, whilst others will never request such a thing as they truly fear exceeding the just limits set out in The Quran. As such there is no consensus on women's dress code (reference: misconceptions-about-islam.com/dress-code-women-veil.htm).

Knowing this, it could be said that The Quran used the most profound and distinguishing of word choices in 4:34 and surely God would not choose His Words in a haphazard manner.

We must remember that a book is sometimes only as good as its reader. Whatever disposition a person has will determine HOW they understand The Quran. Their moral convictions will determine what they will get from it and how they will interpret it, what they choose to apply. More importantly, it will determine **which** definitions of any given word they will gravitate to and seek to uphold. In part, this is the beauty of The Quran: it can bring out what is already within us, our true selves.

I would like to end with reflecting on the concept inherent in the traditional/common understanding of 4:34, and that is to punish another based on a fear/suspicion because one is in a position of power to do so. An act inherently unjust to the ordinary person, but when it comes to practices in the name of a religion, people will commit the most heinous of acts, no matter how irrational. But how wicked is such an act? Let us all turn to The Quran for an answer.

This same word "fear" (Arabic root: Kha-Waw-Fa) occurs 120 times in The Quran and there are other examples in which believers fear something (e.g. fear injustice/sin from one making a statement [2:182], fear not maintaining God's bounds [2:229], fear not acting justly to the orphans or their mother in marriage [4:3], fear betrayal from those with a treaty [8:58], fear unexpected visitors [38:22]) and in ALL cases there is not a mention of resorting to physical violence. To my utmost surprise there was only one

example showing punishment or threat of physical punishment based on a fear/suspicion, and the figure threatening to do such a thing was the undisputed greatest tyrannical figure in The Quran: Pharaoh.

And God judges with the truth, while those they call on besides Him do not judge with anything. Certainly, God is the Hearer, the Seer.

Have they not roamed the Earth and seen how was the consequence of those who were before them? They used to be stronger than they, and had built more in the land. But God seized them for their sins, and they had no protector against God.

That is because their messengers used to come to them with proofs, but they rejected. Thus God seized them; for He is Mighty, severe in punishment.

And We had sent Moses with Our signs, and a clear authority.

To Pharaoh, Haamaan, and Qaroon. But they said: "A lying magician!"

Then, when the truth came to them from Us, they said: "Kill the children of those who believed with him, and spare their women." But the scheming of the rejecters is always in error.

And Pharaoh said: "Leave me to kill Moses, and let him call upon his Lord. I fear that he may change your system, or that he will cause evil to spread throughout the land."

And Moses said: "I seek refuge in my Lord and your Lord from every arrogant one who does not believe in the Day of Reckoning"

And a believing man from among Pharaoh's people, who had concealed his belief, said: "Will you kill a man simply for saying: 'My Lord is God', and he has come to you with proofs from your Lord? And if he is a liar, then his lie will be upon him, and if he is truthful, then some of what he is promising you will afflict you. Surely, God does not guide any transgressor, liar."

"O my people, you have the kingship today throughout the land. But then who will save us against God's torment, should it come to us?" **Pharaoh said: "I am but showing you that which I see, and I am but guiding you in the right path."**

And the one who had attained to faith said: "O my people! Verily, I fear for you the like of what one day befell those leagued together (against God's truth).

"Like the fate of the people of Noah, 'Aad, and Thamud, and those after them. And God does not wish any injustice for the servants."

"And, O my people, I fear for you the Day of mutual distress."

"A Day when you will turn around and flee, you will have no protector besides God, and whomever God sends astray, then there is none who can guide him."

"And Joseph had come to you before with proofs, but you remained in doubt regarding what he came to you with, until when he died, you said: "God will not send any messenger after him." It is such that God sends astray he who is a transgressor, doubter."

Those who dispute about God's signs without any authority that has come to them, it is greatly abhorred with God and by those who believe. God thus seals the hearts of every arrogant tyrant.

[Quran, 40:20-35]

Would God sanction believers to act in a manner that in any way could be likened to the greatest of all tyrants?

I call upon all my dear brothers and sisters in faith to reflect upon this information and the guidance given to us in The Quran, for if one does not read and try to apply a guide, then one cannot expect to be guided. If one does not utilise light to illuminate their surroundings then they will not be able to see. If one does not open themselves up to receive, then they will remain closed. It is that simple. The time has come to free ourselves from the chains and shackles that we have built for ourselves like the past communities before us, holding us back from walking the path God intended for us: to promote peace, freedom, betterment and justice for all. Surely, such a community

would be worthy of God's blessings. No community can succeed if they oppress half of their number, no community can succeed if they shackle half their potential, and no community can succeed if they turn away from God's message. This is God's promise, and He will surely fulfil His part, the time has come to fulfil ours.

And We have cited in this Quran every example for the people. But man was always most argumentative. [18:54]

Shall I seek other than God as a judge when He has sent down to you the book fully clarified? Those whom We have given the book know it is sent down from your Lord with truth; so do not be of those who have doubt. And the word of your Lord is completed with truth and justice, there is no changing His words. He is the Hearer, the Knower. And if you obey the majority of those on Earth they will lead you away from God's path; that is because they follow conjecture, and they themselves do nothing but guess. [6:114-115]

God puts forth the example of a man who has for his masters several partners that dispute with each other, and a man depending wholly upon one man. Are they the same? Praise be to God; most of them do not know. Surely, you will die, and they will die. Then, on the Day of Resurrection, you will quarrel at your Lord. Who then is more wicked than one who lies about God, and denies the truth when it comes to him? Is there not in Hell an abode for those who deny the truth? [39:29-32]

May God grant us the strength to overcome the greatest of all enemies: the enemy within.

God was not to change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves... [13:11]

Peace be upon you.
W.M.

Primary References:

'Verbal Idioms of The Quran' by Mustansir Mir

'Arabic-English Lexicon' by E.W. Lane

'Dictionary of Holy Quran' by Abdul Manan Omar

www.StudyQuran.org (multiple resources used)

www.StudyQuran.co.uk/PRLonline.htm - concordance/grammar/dictionary

Corpus.Quran.com - online concordance/grammar

This work would not have been possible without the many people who have contributed to this topic (both for and against), and without the resources now available to anyone wishing to study The Quran in detail. For these stepping stones, I am indebted and truly thankful.

IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER:

This work reflects my personal understanding, as of February 10th, 2010. Seeking knowledge is a continual process and I will try to improve my understanding of the signs within 'the reading' (*al quran*) and out with it, unless The God wills otherwise. All information is correct to the best of my knowledge only and thus should not be taken as a fact. One should always seek knowledge and verify for themselves when possible: [17:36](#), [20:114](#), [35:28](#), [49:6](#), [58:11](#). If God willed, the outcome of this work will be beneficial.

All comments are welcome, especially corrections, please use the feedback form at: www.Quran434.com

I desire no more than to set right what I was able to; but the achievement of my aim depends on God alone. In Him have I placed my trust, and unto Him do I always turn. [11:88]