

The Arabic particle *lan*

Scholars have been divided over the exact signification of the Arabic subjunctive particle *لن* *lan* in classical Arabic. Three similar meanings have been assigned to it, but it should be clear that scholars unanimously believe *lan* can signify only one of the three; no one holds it to have two or all three meanings. I believe the more likely signification of *lan* was the negative future devoid of any emphasis or perpetuity. In order to substantiate my claim I intend to use three methods. One is to argue using linguistic principles that *lan* should, by default, be taken to indicate the simple negative future (simple in the sense of being devoid of any other meaning). The second and the one that will by far take up the bulk of this paper is to observe all the occurrences of *lan* in the Qur'an. The context of each occurrence should shed light on the author's intended meaning. More specifically, its occurrence together with words that convey emphasis or perpetuity should militate against *lan*'s conveying those meanings, for then the former words would be superfluous. This is the main way I wish to prove that the evidence is qualitatively stronger in favor of my preferred meaning. However, I will use other principles to show that the evidence also quantitatively preponderates against the other two meanings. The third method I intend to employ is to look at the hadith corpus for occurrences of *lan*.

As previously mentioned, no scholar holds *لن* to have more than one meaning; all scholars agree it is monosemous. The bone of contention is *which* meaning it conveys, and scholars have three different opinions in this regard. Some hold it to convey only the negative future, others believe it signifies the negative future together with emphasis, while the rest hold it to mean the perpetual negative future. Thus, according to these opinions, the sentence *لن أذهب*

in classical Arabic would mean “I will not go.”, “I certainly will not go.”, or “I will never go.” respectively.

It is clear why no scholar has ever proposed that لن could have two (or all three) meanings depending on context. The reason is simple: when two meanings are similar, the context will almost never suffice to distinguish them. Since the meanings proposed for لن overlap greatly, it follows that Arabic speakers would not have been able to tell which of the meanings was intended. Furthermore, two meanings that are closely related are likely to collapse into one within a generation or two.

When attempting to ascertain the signification of a word in a dead language, it is clear that one cannot reach a definitive conclusion. There will always be a degree of uncertainty and thus room for disagreement. With that caveat in mind, we can spell out some rules of thumb for deciding what contexts will weigh in favor of or against a meaning.

The linguistic principle alluded to in the introduction is that it stands to reason that positive statements will have their exact negative counterparts. Thus, we have the positive past, e.g. ذهب “He went.” and its negative counterpart, ما ذهب “He did not go.” Similarly, we have the positive present-future, e.g. يذهب “He goes/will go.” and its negative counterpart, لا يذهب “He does not/will not go.” Furthermore, we have the positive modus energiticus I, e.g. ليذهب “He will assuredly go.” and its negative counterpart لا يذهب “He will assuredly not go.” We also have the positive modus energiticus II, e.g. ليذهب “He will assuredly go.” and its negative counterpart لا يذهب “He will assuredly not go.” Finally, we have the future tense, e.g. سوف يذهب/سيذهب “He will go.”. It stands to reason it should have its exact negative counterpart. The only available option is, of course, لن يذهب.

Turning to the Qur’an, the first principle I intend to use is that when the future is discussed in the vicinity of a conditional sentence or just the protasis, it is more likely to be the simple future, i.e. devoid of perpetuity. The reason is that, by default, a protasis or “if-clause” refers to a specific point in time. Therefore, it makes more sense for there to be no perpetuity

in لَنْ, for otherwise it would not be referring to a specific point in the future. Thus, starting from the beginning of the Qur'an, we have the following verses:

وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّمَّا نَزَّلْنَا عَلَىٰ عَبْدِنَا فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّثْلِهِ وَادْعُوا شُهَدَاءَكُمْ مِمَّن دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ. فَإِنْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوا وَلَنْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْتُوا نَارَ النَّارِ الَّتِي تُؤَدُّهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ ۗ أُعِدَّتْ لِلْكَافِرِينَ 2:24

Translation: And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down upon Our Servant [Muhammad], then produce a surah the like thereof and call upon your witnesses other than Allah, if you should be truthful. But if you do not - and you will not be able to - then fear the Fire, whose fuel is men and stones, prepared for the disbelievers.¹

لَنْ يَسْتَنْكِفَ الْمَسِيحُ أَنْ يَكُونَ عَبْدًا لِلَّهِ وَلَا الْمَلَائِكَةُ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ ۗ وَمَنْ يَسْتَنْكِفْ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَيَسْتَكْبِرْ فَسَيَحْشُرُهُمْ إِلَيْهِ جَمِيعًا 4:172

Translation: The Messiah would not disdain to be a servant of Allah, nor would the angels near [to Him]. And whoever disdains His worship and is arrogant - He will gather them to Himself all together.

قُلْ لَنْ يَنْفَعَكُمْ الْفِرَارُ إِنْ فَرَرْتُمْ مِنَ الْمَوْتِ أَوِ الْقَتْلِ 33:16

Translation: Say, [O Muhammad], "Fleeing will not benefit you if you should flee from death or killing; and then [if you did], you would not be given enjoyment [of life] except for a little."

سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَسْتَغْفَرْتَ لَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ لَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ 63:6

¹ All translations of the Qur'an are taken from *Sahih International*, albeit some with slight modifications.

Translation: It is all the same for them whether you ask forgiveness for them or do not ask forgiveness for them; Allah will not forgive them. Indeed, Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people.

وَلَنْ يُؤَخِّرَ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهَا وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ 63:11

Translation: But Allah will not delay a soul when its time has come. And Allah is Acquainted with what you do.

رَعَمَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنْ لَنْ يُبْعَثُوا قُلْ بَلَىٰ وَرَبِّي لَتُبْعَثُنَّ ثُمَّ لَتُنَبَّؤُنَّ بِمَا عَمِلْتُمْ 64:7

Translation: Those who disbelieve have claimed that they will not be resurrected. Say, "Yes, by my Lord, you will surely be resurrected; then you will surely be informed of what you did. And that, for Allah, is easy."

It is extremely unlikely for an assertion to be made using the perpetual future that is then limited temporally, for the perpetuity mentioned initially would serve no purpose. Thus, we have the following verses:

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَىٰ لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّىٰ نَرَىٰ اللَّهَ جَهْرَةً فَأَخَذَتْكُمُ الصَّاعِقَةُ وَأَنْتُمْ تَنْظُرُونَ 2:55

Translation: And [recall] when you said, "O Moses, we will not believe you until we see Allah outright"; so the thunderbolt took you while you were looking on.

وَقَالُوا لَنْ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا مَعْدُودَةً قُلْ أَتَّخَذْتُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَهْدًا فَلَنْ يُخْلِفَ اللَّهُ عَهْدَهُ 2:80

Translation: And they say, "The Fire will not touch us, except for a few days." Say, "Have you taken a covenant with Allah? For Allah will never break His covenant. Or do you say about Allah that which you do not know?"

وَلَنْ تَرْضَىٰ عَنْكَ الْيَهُودُ وَلَا النَّصَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ 2:120

Translation: And the Jews or the Christians will not approve of you until you follow their religion. Say, "Indeed, the guidance of Allah is the [only] guidance." If you were to follow their desires after what has come to you of knowledge, you would have against Allah no protector or helper.

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا لَنْ تَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا مَّعْدُودَاتٍ 3:24

Translation: That is because they say, "The Fire will not touch us except for [a few] numbered days," and [because] they were deluded in their religion by what they were inventing.

لَنْ تَنَالُوا الْبِرَّ حَتَّىٰ تُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا تُحِبُّونَ 3:92

Translation: You will not attain the good [reward] until you spend [in the way of Allah] from that which you love. And whatever you spend - indeed, Allah is Knowing of it.

قَالُوا يَا مُوسَىٰ إِنَّ فِيهَا قَوْمًا جَبَّارِينَ وَإِنَّا لَنْ نَدْخُلَهَا حَتَّىٰ يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا فَإِن يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا فَإِنَّا دَاخِلُونَ 5:22

Translation: They said, "O Moses, indeed within it is a people of tyrannical strength, and indeed, we will not enter it until they leave it; but if they leave it, then we will enter."

قَالُوا يَا مُوسَىٰ إِنَّا لَنْ نَدْخُلَهَا أَبَدًا مَا دَامُوا فِيهَا ۗ فَادْهَبْ أَنْتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلَا إِنَّا هَاهُنَا قَاعِدُونَ 5:24

Translation: They said, "O Moses, indeed we will not enter it, ever, as long as they are within it; so go, you and your Lord, and fight. Indeed, we are remaining right here."

وَإِذَا جَاءَتْهُمْ آيَةٌ قَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ حَتَّىٰ نُؤْتَىٰ مِنْ مِثْلِ مَا آتَىٰ رُسُلَ اللَّهِ ۗ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسَالَتَهُ ۗ سَيُصِيبُ الَّذِينَ

أَجْرَمُوا صَعَارًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَعَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَمْكُرُونَ 6:124

Translation: And when a sign comes to them, they say, "We will not believe until we are given like that which was given to the messengers of Allah." Allah is most knowing of where He places His message. There will afflict those who committed crimes debasement before Allah and severe punishment for what they used to conspire.

قَالَ لَنْ أُرْسِلَهُ مَعَكُمْ حَتَّى تُؤْتُونِ مَوْثِقًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ لِنَأْتِيَنِي بِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يُحَاطَ بِكُمْ فَلَمَّا آتَوْهُ مَوْثِقَهُمْ قَالَ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ مَا نَقُولُ

وَكَيْلٌ 12:66

Translation: [Jacob] said, " I will not send him with you until you give me a promise by Allah that you will bring him [back] to me, unless you should be surrounded by enemies." And when they had given their promise, he said, "Allah, over what we say, is Witness."

فَلَمَّا اسْتَيْأَسُوا مِنْهُ خَلَصُوا نَجِيًّا قَالَ كَبِيرُهُمْ أَلَمْ تَعْلَمُوا أَنَّ آبَاءَكُمْ قَدْ أَخَذَ عَلَيْكُمْ مَوْثِقًا مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَمِن قَبْلُ مَا فَرَّطْتُمْ فِي

يُوسُفَ فَلَنْ أَبْرَحَ الْأَرْضَ حَتَّىٰ يَأْذَنَ لِي أَبِي أَوْ يَحْكُمَ اللَّهُ لِي ۗ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحَاكِمِينَ 12:80

Translation: So when they had despaired of him, they secluded themselves in private consultation. The eldest of them said, "Do you not know that your father has taken upon you an oath by Allah and [that] before you failed in [your duty to] Joseph? So I will never leave [this] land until my father permits me or Allah decides for me, and He is the best of judges.

وَقَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لَكَ حَتَّىٰ تَفْجُرَ لَنَا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ يَنْبُوعًا 17:90

Translation: And they say, "We will not believe you until you break open for us from the ground a spring.

أَوْ يَكُونَ لَكَ بَيْتٌ مِّن زُرْحُفٍ أَوْ تَرْقَىٰ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَلَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لِرُقِيِّكَ حَتَّىٰ تُنَزَّلَ عَلَيْنَا كِتَابًا نَّقْرُؤُهُ ۗ قُلْ سُبْحَانَ رَبِّي

هَلْ كُنْتُ إِلَّا بَشَرًا رَسُولًا 17:93

Translation: Or you have a house of gold or you ascend into the sky. And [even then], we will not believe in your ascension until you bring down to us a book we may read." Say, "Exalted is my Lord! Was I ever but a human messenger?"

فَكُلِّي وَاشْرَبِي وَغَرِّي عَيْنًا طَافًا تَرِيًّا مِنَ الْبَشَرِ أَحَدًا فَقُولِي إِنِّي نَدَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ صَوْمًا فَلَنْ أُكَلِّمَ الْيَوْمَ إِنْسِيًّا

19:26

Translation: So eat and drink and be contented. And if you see from among humanity anyone, say, 'Indeed, I have vowed to the Most Merciful abstention, so I will not speak today to [any] man.' "

قَالُوا لَنْ نَبْرَحَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفِينَ حَتَّىٰ يَرْجِعَ إِلَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ 20:91

Translation: They said, "We will never cease being devoted to the calf until Moses returns to us."

وَلَنْ يَنْفَعَكُمْ الْيَوْمَ إِذْ ظَلَمْتُمْ أَنْكُم فِي الْعَذَابِ مُشْتَرِكُونَ 43:39

Translation: And it will not benefit you that Day, when you have wronged, that you are [all] sharing in the punishment.

If أبدا is being used with a verb, لن is most unlikely to contain the sememe of perpetuity, since أبدا already signifies it. Thus, we have the following verses.

وَلَنْ يَتَمَنَّوْهُ أَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالظَّالِمِينَ 2:95

Translation: But they will not wish for it, ever, because of what their hands have put forth. And Allah is Knowing of the wrongdoers.

فَإِنْ رَجَعَكَ اللَّهُ إِلَى طَائِفَةٍ مِنْهُمْ فَاسْتَأْذَنُوكَ لِلْخُرُوجِ فَقُلْ لَنْ تَخْرُجُوا مَعِيَ أَبَدًا وَلَنْ تُقَاتِلُوا مَعِيَ عَدُوًّا إِنَّكُمْ رَضِيتُمْ بِالْفُجُودِ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ فَافْعُدُوا مَعَ الْخَالِفِينَ 9:83

Translation: If Allah should return you to a faction of them [after the expedition] and then they ask your permission to go out [to battle], say, "You will not go out with me, ever, and you will never fight with me an enemy. Indeed, you were satisfied with sitting [at home] the first time, so sit [now] with those who stay behind."

إِنَّهُمْ إِنْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ يَرْجُمُوكُمْ أَوْ يُعِيدُوكُمْ فِي مِلَّتِهِمْ وَلَنْ تُفْلِحُوا إِذَا أَبَدًا 18:20

Translation: Indeed, if they come to know of you, they will stone you or return you to their religion. And you would not succeed, then - ever."

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ دُكِرَ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ فَأَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا وَنَسِيَ مَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدَاہُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا وَإِنْ تَدْعُهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَى فَلَنْ يَهْتَدُوا إِذًا أَبَدًا 18:57

Translation: And who is more unjust than one who is reminded of the verses of his Lord but turns away from them and forgets what his hands have put forth? Indeed, We have placed over their hearts coverings, lest they understand it, and in their ears deafness. And if you invite them to guidance - they will not be guided, then - ever.

بَلْ ظَنَنْتُمْ أَنْ لَنْ يَنْقَلِبَ الرَّسُولُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِلَى أَهْلِيهِمْ أَبَدًا وَزُيِّنَ ذَلِكَ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَظَنَّتُمْ ظَنَّ السَّوْءِ وَكُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا بُورًا 48:12

Translation: But you thought that the Messenger and the believers would not return to their families, ever, and that was made pleasing in your hearts. And you assumed an assumption of evil and became a people ruined."

Analogously to what was just mentioned, if a verse contains a word emphasizing the negation of the verb, it is most unlikely لن would contain the meaning of emphasis. Thus, we have

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَنْ نُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا ۗ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمْ وَقُودُ النَّارِ 3:10

Translation: Indeed, those who disbelieve - never will their wealth or their children avail them against Allah at all. And it is they who are fuel for the Fire.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارًا فَلَنْ يُوَفَّىٰ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمْ مِثْلُ الْأَرْضِ مَلءُهَا ذَهَبًا وَلَوْ افْتَدَىٰ بِهِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ 3:91

Translation: Indeed, those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers - the [whole] capacity of the earth in gold would not be accepted from one of them if he would [seek to] ransom himself with it. For those there will be a painful punishment, and they will have no helpers.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَنْ نُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا ۗ وَأُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ۗ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ 3:116

Translation: Indeed, those who disbelieve - their wealth or their children will not avail them against Allah at all, and those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide therein eternally.

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ ۗ أَفَإِنْ مَاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ ۗ وَمَنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَىٰ عَقْبَيْهِ فَلَنْ يَضُرَّ اللَّهَ شَيْئًا ۗ وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ 3:144

Translation: Muhammad is not but a messenger. [Other] messengers have passed on before him. So if he was to die or be killed, would you turn back on your heels [to unbelief]? And he who turns back on his heels will not harm Allah at all; but Allah will reward the grateful.

وَلَا يَحْزُنكَ الَّذِينَ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْكُفْرِ إِنَّهُمْ لَن يَضُرُّوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَلَّا يَجْعَلَ لَهُمْ حِطًّا فِي الْآخِرَةِ ۗ وَلَهُمْ

عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ 3:176

Translation: And do not be grieved, [O Muhammad], by those who hasten into disbelief. Indeed, they will not harm Allah at all. Allah intends that He should give them no share in the Hereafter, and for them is a great punishment.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوْا الْكُفْرَ بِالْإِيمَانِ لَن يَضُرُّوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ 3:177

Translation: Indeed, those who purchase disbelief [in exchange] for faith - they will not harm Allah at all, and for them is a painful punishment.

يَا أَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ لَا يَحْزُنكَ الَّذِينَ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْكُفْرِ مِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَلَمْ تُؤْمِن قُلُوبُهُمْ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ هَادُوا سَمَّاعُونَ لِلْكَذِبِ سَمَّاعُونَ لِقَوْمٍ آخَرِينَ لَمْ يَأْتُواكَ ۖ يَحْرَفُونَ الْكَلِمَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوَاضِعِهِ ۗ يَقُولُونَ إِنْ أُوتِينَا هَذَا فَخُذُوهُ وَإِن لَمْ نُؤْتُوهُ فَاحْذَرُوا ۗ وَمَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ فِتْنَتَهُ فَلَن تَمْلِكَ لَهُ مِنْ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا ۗ أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُطَهِّر قُلُوبَهُمْ ۗ لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ ۗ وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ 5:41

Translation: O Messenger, let them not grieve you who hasten into disbelief of those who say, "We believe" with their mouths, but their hearts believe not, and from among the Jews. [They are] avid listeners to falsehood, listening to another people who have not come to you. They distort words beyond their [proper] usages, saying "If you are given this, take it; but if you are not given it, then beware." But he for whom Allah intends fitnah - never will you possess [power to do] for him a thing against Allah. Those are the ones for whom Allah does not intend to purify their hearts. For them in this world is disgrace, and for them in the Hereafter is a great punishment.

سَمَّاعُونَ لِلْكَذِبِ أَكَّالُونَ لِلسُّحْتِ ۗ فَإِن جَاءُوك فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُمْ أَوْ أَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ ۗ وَإِن تُعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ فَلَن يَضُرُّوكَ شَيْئًا ۗ

وَإِن حَكَمْتَ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِالْقِسْطِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ 5:42

Translation: [They are] avid listeners to falsehood, devourers of [what is] unlawful. So if they come to you, [O Muhammad], judge between them or turn away from them. And if you turn away from them - never will they harm you at all. And if you judge, judge between them with justice. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly.

إِن تَسْتَفْتِحُوا فَقَدْ جَاءَكُمُ الْفَتْحُ ۗ وَإِن تَنْتَهُوا فهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ ۗ وَإِن تَعُودُوا نَعُدْ ۗ وَلِنُغْنِيَ عَنْكُم مِّنْ شَيْءٍ وَلَوْ كَثُرَتْ
وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ 8:19

Translation: If you [disbelievers] seek the victory - the defeat has come to you. And if you desist [from hostilities], it is best for you; but if you return [to war], We will return, and you will not be availed by your [large] company at all, even if it should increase; and [that is] because Allah is with the believers.

إِنَّهُمْ لَن يُغْنُوا عَنْكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا ۗ وَإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ 45:19

Translation: Indeed, they will not avail you against Allah at all. And indeed, the wrongdoers are allies of one another; but Allah is the protector of the righteous.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَشَاقُّوا الرَّسُولَ مِن بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْهُدَىٰ لَن يَضُرُّوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَسَيُحِطُّ
أَعْمَالُهُمْ 47:32

Translation: Indeed, those who disbelieved and averted [people] from the path of Allah and opposed the Messenger after guidance had become clear to them - never will they harm Allah at all, and He will render worthless their deeds.

لَن تُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ۗ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ 58:17

Translation: Their wealth or their children will not avail them against Allah at all. Those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide therein eternally.

Some have argued that if a verse contains emphasis, لن is not likely to contain perpetuity, as the two do not seem to make a good pair. Thus, they quote

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمْ مِلْءُ الْأَرْضِ ذَهَبًا وَلَوْ افْتَدَىٰ بِهِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ 3:91

Translation: Indeed, those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers - the [whole] capacity of the earth in gold would not be accepted from one of them if he would [seek to] ransom himself with it. For those there will be a painful punishment, and they will have no helpers.

Here the non-acceptance from the disbelievers of all the gold in the world is a way of emphasizing that nothing will be accepted from them once they have died in a state of disbelief and entered the next life. However, emphasis does not seem incompatible with perpetuity, so the mere existence of emphasis in a statement does not seem to preclude the meaning of perpetuity. Thus, it does not sound strange in English to say, “I will certainly never go.”, where “certainly” conveys emphasis. So, this argument in favor of our preferred meaning does not seem strong. However, this verse can still be adduced in conjunction with another principle, as we shall see below.

In some rhetorical questions لن makes far more sense if it is simply taken to mean the negative future, for the rhetorical question will essentially be stating the positive future. Thus, we have

إِذْ تَقُولُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَلَنْ يَكْفِيَكُمْ أَنْ يُمدِّكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ بِثَلَاثَةِ آفَافٍ مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ مُنَزَّلِينَ 3:124

Translation: [Remember] when you said to the believers, "Is it not sufficient for you that your Lord should reinforce you with three thousand angels sent down?"

In some contexts it is clear the negation refers not to the future for all time to come but to a specific point.

وَمَا مُحَمَّدٌ إِلَّا رَسُولٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ ۚ أَفَأَنْ مَاتَ أَوْ قُتِلَ انْقَلَبْتُمْ عَلَىٰ أَعْقَابِكُمْ ۚ وَمَنْ يَنْقَلِبْ عَلَىٰ عَقْبَيْهِ فَلَنْ يَصُرَ اللَّهُ شَيْئًا ۗ وَسَيَجْزِي اللَّهُ الشَّاكِرِينَ 3:144

Translation: Muhammad is not but a messenger. [Other] messengers have passed on before him. So if he was to die or be killed, would you turn back on your heels [to unbelief]? And he who turns back on his heels will not harm Allah at all; but Allah will reward the grateful.

وَلَمَّا جَاءَ مُوسَىٰ لِمِيقَاتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهُ رَبُّهُ قَالَ رَبِّ أَرِنِي أَنظُرْ إِلَيْكَ ۚ قَالَ لَنْ تَرَاني وَلَكِنِ انظُرْ إِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَإِنِ اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُ فَسَوْفَ تَرَاني ۚ فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّىٰ رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ جَعَلَهُ دَكًّا وَخَرَّ مُوسَىٰ صَعِقًا ۚ فَلَمَّا أَفَاقَ قَالَ سُبْحَانَكَ تُبْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ 7:143

Translation: And when Moses arrived at Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said, "My Lord, show me [Yourself] that I may look at You." [Allah] said, "You will not see Me, but look at the mountain; if it should remain in place, then you will see Me." But when his Lord appeared to the mountain, He rendered it level, and Moses fell unconscious. And when he awoke, he said, "Exalted are You! I have repented to You, and I am the first of the believers."

قُلْ أَنْفَعُوا طُوعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا لَنْ يُتَقَبَلَ مِنْكُمْ ۗ إِنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ 9:53

Translation: Say, "Spend willingly or unwillingly; it will not be accepted from you. Indeed, you have been a defiantly disobedient people."

اسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ أَوْ لَا تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ إِنْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ ۗ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ 9:80

Translation: Ask forgiveness for them, [O Muhammad], or do not ask forgiveness for them. If you should ask forgiveness for them seventy times - never will Allah forgive them. That is because they disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger, and Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people.

يَعْتَذِرُونَ إِلَيْكُمْ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ إِلَيْهِمْ ۗ قُلْ لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ لَكُمْ قَدْ نَبَّأَنَا اللَّهُ مِنْ أَخْبَارِكُمْ ۗ وَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ ثُمَّ تُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ 9:94

Translation: They will make excuses to you when you have returned to them. Say, "Make no excuse - we will not believe you. Allah has already informed us of your news. And Allah will observe your deeds, and [so will] His Messenger; then you will be taken back to the Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, and He will inform you of what you used to do."

قَالُوا يَا لَوِطُ إِنَّا رُسُلُ رَبِّكَ لَنْ يَصِلُوا إِلَيْكَ ۗ فَأَسْرَبَ أَهْلَكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ وَلَا يَلْتَفِتْ مِنْكُمْ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَكَ ۗ إِنَّهُ مُصِيبُهَا مَا أَصَابَهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ مَوْعِدَهُمُ الصُّبْحُ ۗ أَلَيْسَ الصُّبْحُ بِقَرِيبٍ 11:81

Translation: The angels said, "O Lot, indeed we are messengers of your Lord; [therefore], they will never reach you. So set out with your family during a portion of the night and let not any among you look back - except your wife; indeed, she will be struck by that which strikes them. Indeed, their appointment is [for] the morning. Is not the morning near?"

وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا ۗ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَخْرِقَ الْأَرْضَ وَلَنْ تَبْلُغَ الْجِبَالَ طُولًا 17:37

Translation: And do not walk upon the earth exultantly. Indeed, you will not tear the earth [apart], and you will not reach the mountains in height.

إِنَّهُمْ إِنْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ يَرْجُمُوكُمْ أَوْ يُعِيدُوكُمْ فِي مِلَّتِهِمْ وَلَنْ تُفْلِحُوا إِذًا أَبَدًا 18:20

Translation: Indeed, if they come to know of you, they will stone you or return you to their religion. And you would not succeed, then - ever."

أَوْ يُصْبِحَ مَأْوَاهَا غَوْرًا فَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ لَهُ طَلْبًا 18:41

Translation: Or its water will become sunken [into the earth], so you would not be able to seek it."

قَالَ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا 18:67

Translation: He said, "Indeed, with me you will never be able to have patience.

قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا 18:72

Translation: [Al-Khadhir] said, "Did I not say that with me you would not be able to have patience?"

قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكَ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا 18:75

Translation: [Al-Khadhir] said, "Did I not tell you that with me you would not be able to have patience?"

قَالَ فَادْهَبْ فَإِنَّ لَكَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ أَنْ تَقُولَ لَا مِسَاسَ ۗ وَإِنَّ لَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَنْ نُخْلِفَهُ ۗ وَلَنْ نُعَذِّبَ ۗ وَانظُرْ إِلَى إِلَهِكَ الَّذِي ظَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ

عَاكِفًا ۗ لَنُحَرِّقَنَّهُ ثُمَّ لَنَنْسِفَنَّهُ فِي الْيَمِّ نَسْفًا 20:97

Translation: [Moses] said, "Then go. And indeed, it is [decreed] for you in [this] life to say, 'No contact.' And indeed, you have an appointment [in the Hereafter] you will not fail to keep. And look at your 'god' to which you remained devoted. We will surely burn it and blow it into the sea with a blast.

لَنْ يَنَالَ اللَّهَ لُحُومُهَا وَلَا دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْكُمْ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ سَخَّرَهَا لَكُمْ لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُمْ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ

المُحْسِنِينَ 22:37

Translation: Their meat will not reach Allah, nor will their blood, but what reaches Him is piety from you. Thus have We subjected them to you that you may glorify Allah for that [to] which He has guided you; and give good tidings to the doers of good.

سَيَقُولُ الْمُخَلَّفُونَ إِذَا انطَلَقْتُمْ إِلَىٰ مَغَائِمٍ لِّتَأْخُذُوا بِهَا ذُرُوعًا تَتَّبِعُكُمْ ۖ يُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُبَدِّلُوا كَلَامَ اللَّهِ ۗ قُلْ لَنْ تَتَّبِعُونَا كَذَٰلِكُمْ

قَالَ اللَّهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۗ فَسَيَقُولُونَ بَلْ تَحْسُدُونَنَا ۗ بَلْ كَانُوا لَا يَفْقَهُونَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا 48:15

Translation: Those who remained behind will say when you set out toward the war booty to take it, "Let us follow you." They wish to change the words of Allah. Say, "You will not follow us. Thus did Allah say before." So they will say, "Rather, you envy us." But [in fact] they were not understanding except a little.

When contrasted with a positive future, it is more likely that لَنْ indicates merely the negative future. Thus, we see

قَالُوا يَا مُوسَىٰ إِنَّ فِيهَا قَوْمًا جَبَّارِينَ وَإِنَّا لَنْ نَدْخُلَهَا حَتَّىٰ يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا فَإِن يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا فَإِنَّا دَاخِلُونَ 5:22

Translation: They said, "O Moses, indeed within it is a people of tyrannical strength, and indeed, we will not enter it until they leave it; but if they leave it, then we will enter."

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ تَقُومُ أَدْنَىٰ مِنْ ثُلُثِي اللَّيْلِ وَنِصْفَهُ وَثُلُثَهُ وَطَائِفَةٌ مِنَ الَّذِينَ مَعَكَ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يُقَدِّرُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ۗ عَلِمَ أَنْ لَنْ تُحْصِيَهُ فَتَابَ عَلَيْكُمْ ۖ فَاقْرَءُوا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنَ الْقُرْآنِ ۗ عَلِمَ أَنْ سَيَكُونُ مِنْكُمْ مَرْضَىٰ ۚ وَأَخْرُونَ ۚ يَصْرَبُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ يُبْتَغُونَ مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَأَخْرُونَ ۚ يَقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۖ فَاقْرَءُوا مَا تَيَسَّرَ مِنْهُ ۗ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَقْرِضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا ۗ وَمَا تُقَدِّمُوا لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ نَجِدُوهُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ هُوَ خَيْرًا وَأَعْظَمَ أَجْرًا ۗ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا لِلَّذِينَ هُمْ بِإِثْمِهِمْ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَنْفَعَهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ 73:20

Translation: Indeed, your Lord knows, [O Muhammad], that you stand [in prayer] almost two thirds of the night or half of it or a third of it, and [so do] a group of those with

you. And Allah determines [the extent of] the night and the day. He has known that you [Muslims] will not be able to do it and has turned to you in forgiveness, so recite what is easy [for you] of the Qur'an. He has known that there will be among you those who are ill and others traveling throughout the land seeking [something] of the bounty of Allah and others fighting for the cause of Allah. So recite what is easy from it and establish prayer and give zakah and loan Allah a goodly loan. And whatever good you put forward for yourselves - you will find it with Allah. It is better and greater in reward. And seek forgiveness of Allah. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.

Some verbs that have a negative meaning are always constructed with the negative, and therefore end up giving a positive meaning. In such cases it is more likely for **لن** to simply negate the future, because the end result is a simple positive future, devoid of any other meaning. Indeed, it is hard to imagine what the other two meanings of **لن** would result in here.

قَالُوا لَنْ نَبْرَحَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفِينَ حَتَّىٰ يَرْجِعَ إِلَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ 20:91

Translation: They said, "We will continue being devoted to the calf until Moses returns to us."

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَشَاقُّوا الرَّسُولَ مِن بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْهُدَىٰ لَنْ يَضُرُّوا اللَّهَ شَيْئًا وَسَيُحِطُّ
أَعْمَالَهُمْ 47:32

Translation: Indeed, those who disbelieved and averted [people] from the path of Allah and opposed the Messenger after guidance had become clear to them - they will not harm Allah at all, and He will render worthless their deeds.

In order to restrict the positive meaning of a verb, Arabic employs four methods, one of which is to use the negated verb followed by a word denoting exception followed by what

the verb is being restricted to. If the negation contained in the negated verb has neither emphasis nor perpetuity, it is clear that the basic meaning of the verb is what is being predicated of the restricted word. However, if the negation contains the additional sememe of emphasis or perpetuity, it is not clear if this meaning, together with the positive verb, is to be predicated of the word being restricted. Thus, we have

وَقَالُوا لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الْجَنَّةَ إِلَّا مَنْ كَانَ هُودًا أَوْ نَصَارَىٰ ۗ تِلْكَ أَمَانِيُّهُمْ ۗ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ 2:111

Translation: And they say, "None will enter Paradise except one who is a Jew or a Christian." That is [merely] their wishful thinking, Say, "Produce your proof, if you should be truthful."

لَنْ يَضُرُّوكُمْ إِلَّا أَذًى ۖ وَإِنْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ يُؤَلُّوكُمْ الْأُدْبَارَ ثُمَّ لَا يُنصَرُونَ 3:111

Translation: They will not harm you except for [some] annoyance. And if they fight you, they will show you their backs; then they will not be aided.

قُلْ لَنْ يُصِيبَنَا إِلَّا مَا كَتَبَ اللَّهُ لَنَا هُوَ مَوْلَانَا ۗ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ 9:51

Translation: Say, "We will not be struck except by what Allah has decreed for us; He is our protector." And upon Allah let the believers rely.

وَأُوحِيَ إِلَىٰ نُوحٍ أَنَّهُ لَنْ يُؤْمِنَ مِنْ قَوْمِكَ إِلَّا مَن قَدْ آمَنَ فَلَا تَبْتَئِسْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ 11:36

Translation: And it was revealed to Noah that, "No one will believe from your people except those who have already believed, so do not be distressed by what they have been doing.

فَذُوقُوا فَلَنْ نَزِيدَكُمْ إِلَّا عَذَابًا 78:30

Translation: "So taste [the penalty], and We will not increase you except in torment."

Using Ockham's razor, it is reasonable to assume that, unless proven otherwise, one morpheme has one sememe. Therefore, unless proven otherwise, لَنْ should be assumed to only negate the future. One may argue that even this signification comprises two sememes, namely negation and futurity. Be that as it may, the other two opinions are even worse in this regard, for they comprise three sememes each: the two just mentioned and either emphasis or perpetuity. So, the plain negative future is the simplest signification and therefore the one we should assume by default. Based on Ockham's razor one may be tempted to venture a fourth opinion, namely that لَنْ indicates only negation or only futurity, but the language already contains morphemes that correspond to the negation sememe and futurity sememe respectively. It should therefore come as no surprise that there is a separate morpheme that is composed of these two sememes.

With the aforementioned principle in mind we turn to the Qur'an to see if, among the verses left over, there are any that do not admit of our preferred meaning. It bears repetition that even if one of the other two meanings fits, the former would be preferred by virtue of the principle explained above.

وَإِذْ قُلْتُمْ يَا مُوسَىٰ لَنْ نَصْبِرَ عَلَىٰ طَعَامٍ وَاجِدٍ فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُخْرِجْ لَنَا مِمَّا تُنْبِتُ الْأَرْضُ مِنْ بَقْلِهَا وَقِثَائِهَا وَفُومِهَا وَعَدَسِيهَا وَبَصِلِهَا ۗ قَالَ أَسْتَبْدِلُونَ الَّذِي هُوَ أَدْنَىٰ بِالَّذِي هُوَ خَيْرٌ ۗ اهْبِطُوا مِصْرًا فَإِنَّ لَكُمْ مِمَّا سَأَلْتُمْ ۗ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الذَّلِيلَةُ ۗ وَالْمَسْكَنَةُ وَبَاءُوا بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ ۗ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَيَقْتُلُونَ النَّبِيِّينَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ۗ ذَلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَكَانُوا يَعْتَدُونَ 2:61

Translation: And [recall] when you said, "O Moses, we will not be able to endure one [kind of] food. So call upon your Lord to bring forth for us from the earth its green herbs and its cucumbers and its garlic and its lentils and its onions." [Moses] said, "Would you exchange what is better for what is less? Go into [any] settlement and indeed, you will have what you have asked." And they were covered with humiliation and poverty and returned with anger from

Allah [upon them]. That was because they [repeatedly] disbelieved in the signs of Allah and killed the prophets without right. That was because they disobeyed and were [habitually] transgressing.

وَقَالُوا لَنْ نَمَسَّنَا النَّارُ إِلَّا أَيَّامًا مَعْدُودَةً قُلْ أَنْتَخَذْتُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَهْدًا فَلَنْ يُخْلِفَ اللَّهُ عَهْدَهُ ۗ أَمْ تَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ 2:80

Translation: And they say, "The Fire will not touch us, except for a few days." Say, "Have you taken a covenant with Allah? For Allah will never break His covenant. Or do you say about Allah that which you do not know?"

In this verse it is the second instance of لن with which we are concerned.

وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ 3:85

Translation: And whoever desires other than Islam as religion - it will not be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بَعْدَ إِيمَانِهِمْ ثُمَّ أَزْدَادُوا كُفْرًا لَنْ تَقْبَلَ تَوْبَتُهُمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الضَّالُّونَ 3:90

Translation: Indeed, those who reject the message after their belief and then increase in disbelief - their [claimed] repentance will not be accepted, and they are the ones astray.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَمَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفْرًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمْ مِلءُ الْأَرْضِ ذَهَبًا وَلَوْ افْتَدَىٰ بِهِ ۗ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ نَاصِرِينَ 3:91

Translation: Indeed, those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers - the [whole] capacity of the earth in gold would not be accepted from one of them if he would [seek to] ransom himself with it. For those there will be a painful punishment, and they will have no helpers.

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَمَنْ يَلْعَنِ اللَّهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ نَصِيرًا 4:52

Translation: Those are the ones whom Allah has cursed; and he whom Allah curses - you will not find for him a helper.

فَمَا لَكُمْ فِي الْمُنَافِقِينَ فِتْنَةٍ وَاللَّهُ أَرْكَسَهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوا ۗ أَتُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَهْدُوا مَنْ أَضَلَّ اللَّهُ وَمَنْ يُضِلِّ اللَّهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ

سَبِيلًا 4:88

Translation: What is [the matter] with you [that you are] two groups concerning the hypocrites, while Allah has made them fall back [into error and disbelief] for what they earned. Do you wish to guide those whom Allah has sent astray? And he whom Allah sends astray - you find will not for him a way [of guidance].

وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيعُوا أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا بَيْنَ النِّسَاءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ ۗ فَلَا تَمِيلُوا كُلَّ الْمِيلِ فَتَدْرُوهَا كَالْمُعَلَّقَةِ ۗ وَإِنْ تُصْلِحُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ

اللَّهُ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا 4:129

Translation: And you will not be able to be equal [in feeling] between wives, even if you should strive [to do so]. So do not incline completely [toward one] and leave another hanging. And if you amend [your affairs] and fear Allah - then indeed, Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful.

الَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ بِكُمْ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فَتْحٌ مِّنَ اللَّهِ قَالُوا أَلَمْ نَكُن مَّعَكُمْ وَإِنْ كَانَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ نَصِيبٌ قَالُوا أَلَمْ نَسْتَحِذْ عَيْبَكُمْ

وَنَمْنَعُكُم مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۗ قَالَهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ ۗ وَلَنْ يَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ سَبِيلًا 4:141

Translation: Those who wait [and watch] you. Then if you gain a victory from Allah, they say, "Were we not with you?" But if the disbelievers have a success, they say [to them], "Did we not gain the advantage over you, but we protected you from the believers?" Allah will judge between [all of] you on the Day of Resurrection, and Allah will not give the disbelievers over the believers a way [to overcome them].

مُدْبِذِينَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ لَا إِلَىٰ هَٰؤُلَاءِ وَلَا إِلَىٰ هَٰؤُلَاءِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَلَن تَجِدَ لَهُ سَبِيلًا 4:143

Translation: Wavering between them, [belonging] neither to the believers nor to the disbelievers. And whoever Allah leaves astray - you will not find for him a way.

إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ فِي الدَّرَكِ الْأَسْفَلِ مِنَ النَّارِ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُمْ نَصِيرًا 4:145

Translation: Indeed, the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire - and will you not find for them a helper.

فَإِنْ رَجَعَكَ اللَّهُ إِلَىٰ طَائِفَةٍ مِنْهُمْ فَاسْتَأْذَنُوكَ لِلْخُرُوجِ فَقُلْ لَنْ تَخْرُجُوا مَعِيَ أَبَدًا وَلَنْ تُقَاتِلُوا مَعِيَ عَدُوًّا ۗ إِنَّكُمْ رَضِيتُمْ بِالْفُجُورِ أَوْلَىٰ مَرَّةً فَافْعَلُوا مَعَ الْخَالِفِينَ 9:83

Translation: If Allah should return you to a faction of them [after the expedition] and then they ask your permission to go out [to battle], say, "You will not go out with me, ever, and you will never fight with me an enemy. Indeed, you were satisfied with sitting [at home] the first time, so sit [now] with those who stay behind."

Here it is the second occurrence of لَنْ that is relevant.

وَلَا أَقُولُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِي خَزَائِنُ اللَّهِ وَلَا أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَا أَقُولُ إِنِّي مَلَكٌ وَلَا أَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ تَزْدَرِي أَعْيُنُكُمْ لَنْ يُؤْتِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ خَيْرًا ۗ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ ۗ إِنِّي إِذَا لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ 11:31

Translation: And I do not tell you that I have the depositories [containing the provision] of Allah or that I know the unseen, nor do I tell you that I am an angel, nor do I say of those upon whom your eyes look down that Allah will not grant them any good. Allah is most knowing of what is within their souls. Indeed, I would then be among the wrongdoers."

وَمَنْ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِ ۗ وَمَنْ يُضِلِلْ فَلَن تَجِدَ لَهُم أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِهِ ۗ وَنَحْشُرُهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَلَىٰ وُجُوهِهِمْ عُمِّيًّا وَبُكْمًا وَصُمًّا ۗ مَا وَالَهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ كُلًّا حَبِثًا زِدْنَاهُمْ سَعِيرًا 17:97

Translation: And whoever Allah guides - he is the [rightly] guided; and whoever He sends astray - you will not find for them protectors besides Him, and We will gather them on the Day of Resurrection [fallen] on their faces - blind, dumb and deaf. Their refuge is Hell; every time it subsides We increase them in blazing fire.

وَرَبَطْنَا عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ إِذْ قَامُوا فَقَالُوا رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَن نَّدْعُو مِن دُونِهِ إِلَهًا لَّقَدْ قُلْنَا إِذًا شَطَطًا

18:14

Translation: And We made firm their hearts when they stood up and said, "Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth. Never will we invoke besides Him any deity. We would have certainly spoken, then, an excessive transgression.

وَتَرَى الشَّمْسَ إِذَا طَلَعَتْ تَزَاوَرُ عَن كَهْفِهِمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِينِ وَإِذَا غَرَبَتْ تَقْرِضُهُمْ ذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ وَهُمْ فِي فَجْوَةٍ مِّنْهُ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ

مِّنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ ۗ وَمَن يُضِلِلْ قَلْبًا فَجَدَّ لَهُ وَلِيًّا مُّزِيدًا 18:17

Translation: And [had you been present], you would see the sun when it rose, inclining away from their cave on the right, and when it set, passing away from them on the left, while they were [laying] within an open space thereof. That was from the signs of Allah. He whom Allah guides is the [rightly] guided, but he whom He leaves astray - you will not find for him a protecting guide.

وَإِذْ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ رَبِّكَ ۗ لَا تَجِدُ لِكَلِمَاتِهِ وَلَن تَجِدَ مِن دُونِهِ مُلْتَحَدًا 18:27

Translation: And recite, [O Muhammad], what has been revealed to you of the Book of your Lord. There is no changer of His words, and you will not find in other than Him a refuge.

وَرَبُّكَ الْعَفُورُ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ ۗ لَوْ يُؤَاخِذُهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوا لَعَجَّلَ لَهُمُ الْعَذَابَ ۗ بَلْ لَهُم مَّوْعِدٌ لَّن يَجِدُوا مِن دُونِهِ مَوْئِلًا

18:58

Translation: And your Lord is the Forgiving, full of mercy. If He were to impose blame upon them for what they earned, He would have hastened for them the punishment. Rather, for them is an appointment from which they will not find an escape.

قَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْتِرَكَ عَلَىٰ مَا جَاءَنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالَّذِي فَطَرَنَا فَاقْضِ مَا أَنْتَ قَاضٍ إِنَّمَا تَقْضِي هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا

20:72

Translation: They said, "We will not prefer you over what has come to us of clear proofs and [over] He who created us. So decree whatever you are to decree. You can only decree for this worldly life.

وَذَا النُّونِ إِذْ ذَهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ فَنَادَىٰ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ

الظَّالِمِينَ 21:87

Translation: And [mention] the man of the fish, when he went off in anger and thought that We would not decree [anything] upon him. And he called out within the darknesses, "There is no deity except You; exalted are You. Indeed, I have been of the wrongdoers."

مَنْ كَانَ يَظُنُّ أَنْ لَنْ يَنْصُرَهُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ فَلْيَمْدُدْ بِسَبَبٍ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ ثُمَّ لِيَقْطَعْ فَلْيَنْظُرْ هَلْ يُدْهِبَنَّ كَيْدُهُ مَا

يَخِيطُ 22:15

Translation: Whoever should think that Allah will not support [Prophet Muhammad] in this world and the Hereafter - let him extend a rope to the ceiling, then cut off [his breath], and let him see: will his effort remove that which enrages [him]?

وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ وَلَنْ يُخْلِفَ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ ۗ وَإِنَّ يَوْمًا عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ كَأَلْفِ سَنَةٍ مِمَّا تَعُدُّونَ 22:47

Translation: And they urge you to hasten the punishment. But Allah will not fail in His promise. And indeed, a day with your Lord is like a thousand years of those which you count.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ضُرِبَ مَثَلٌ فَاستَمِعُوا لَهُ ۚ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَنْ يَخْلُقُوا ذُبَابًا وَلَوْ اجْتَمَعُوا لَهُ ۗ وَإِنْ يَسْلُبْهُمُ الذُّبَابُ شَيْئًا لَا يَسْتَنْقِذُوهُ مِنْهُ ۚ ضَعُفَ الطَّالِبُ وَالْمَطْلُوبُ ۗ 22:73

Translation: O people, an example is presented, so listen to it. Indeed, those you invoke besides Allah will not create [as much as] a fly, even if they gathered together for that purpose. And if the fly should steal away from them a [tiny] thing, they could not recover it from him. Weak are the pursuer and pursued.

قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ فَلَنْ أَكُونَ ظَهِيرًا لِلْمُجْرِمِينَ 28:17

Translation: He said, "My Lord, for the favor You bestowed upon me, I will not be an assistant to the criminals."

سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ فِي الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۗ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا 33:62

Translation: [This is] the established way of Allah with those who passed on before; and you will not find in the way of Allah any change.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَنْ نُؤْمِنَ بِهَذَا الْقُرْآنِ وَلَا بِالَّذِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ ۗ وَلَوْ تَرَىٰ إِذِ الظَّالِمُونَ مَوْقُوفُونَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يَرْجِعُ بَعْضُهُمْ إِلَىٰ بَعْضٍ الْقَوْلَ يَفُؤُونَ ۗ لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَضَعُوا لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ أَنْتُمْ لَكُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ 34:31

Translation: And those who disbelieve say, "We will not believe in this Qur'an nor in that before it." But if you could see when the wrongdoers are made to stand before their Lord, refuting each other's words... Those who were oppressed will say to those who were arrogant, "If not for you, we would have been believers."

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً يَرْجُونَ تِجَارَةً لَّن تَبُورَ 35:29

Translation: Indeed, those who recite the Book of Allah and establish prayer and spend [in His cause] out of what We have provided them, secretly and publicly, [can] expect a profit that will not perish.

اسْتِكْبَارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَكْرَ السَّيِّئِ ۚ وَلَا يَحِيقُ الْمَكْرُ السَّيِّئُ إِلَّا بِأَهْلِهِ ۚ فَهَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا سُنَّتَ الْأَوَّلِينَ ۗ فَلَن تَجِدَ

لِسُنَّتِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا ۗ وَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّتِ اللَّهِ تَحْوِيلًا ۗ 35:43

Translation: [Due to] arrogance in the land and plotting of evil; but the evil plot does not encompass except its own people. Then do they await except the way of the former peoples? But you will not find in the way of Allah any change, and you will never find in the way of Allah any alteration.

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ يُوسُفُ مِنْ قَبْلُ بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَمَا زِلْتُمْ فِي شَكِّ مِمَّا جَاءَكُمْ بِهِ ۖ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا هَلَكَ قُلْتُمْ لَن يَبْعَثَ اللَّهُ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ

رَسُولًا ۗ كَذَلِكَ يَضِلُّ اللَّهُ مَنْ هُوَ مُسْرِفٌ مُرْتَابٌ 40:34

Translation: And Joseph had already come to you before with clear proofs, but you remained in doubt of that which he brought to you, until when he died, you said, 'Allah will not send a messenger after him.' Thus does Allah leave astray he who is a transgressor and skeptic."

فَإِذَا لَقِيتُمْ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَضَرْبِ الرِّقَابِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَثْبَثْتُمْهُمْ فَشُدُّوا الوثَاقَ فَإِمَّا مَنًّا بَعْدُ وَإِمَّا فِدَاءً حَتَّىٰ تَضَعَ الْحَرْبُ

أُوزَارَهَا ۗ ذَلِكَ وَلَوْ يَشَاءُ اللَّهُ لَانْتَصَرَ مِنْهُمْ وَلَٰكِن لِّيَبْلُوَ بَعْضَكُمْ بِبَعْضٍ ۗ وَالَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَلَن يُضِلَّ أَعْمَالَهُمْ 47:4

Translation: So when you meet those who disbelieve [in battle], strike [their] necks until, when you have inflicted slaughter upon them, then secure their bonds, and either [confer] favor afterwards or ransom [them] until the war lays down its burdens. That [is the command]. And if Allah had willed, He could have taken vengeance upon them [Himself], but [He ordered armed struggle] to test some of you by means of others. And those who are killed in the cause of Allah - He will not waste their deeds.

أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ أَن لَّن يُخْرِجَ اللَّهُ أَصْغَانَهُمْ 47:29

Translation: Or do those in whose hearts is disease think that Allah would not expose their [feelings of] hatred?

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ مَاتُوا وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ فَلَن يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ 47:34

Translation: Indeed, those who disbelieved and averted [people] from the path of Allah and then died while they were disbelievers - Allah will not forgive them.

فَلَا تَهِنُوا وَتَدْعُوا إِلَى السَّلْمِ وَأَنْتُمُ الْأَعْلَوْنَ وَاللَّهُ مَعَكُمْ وَلَنْ يَتَرَكُمُ أَعْمَالُكُمْ 47:35

Translation: So do not weaken and call for peace while you are superior; and Allah is with you and will not deprive you of [the reward of] your deeds.

سُنَّةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي قَدْ خَلَتْ مِن قَبْلُ^ط وَلَن تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةِ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا 48:23

Translation: [This is] the established way of Allah which has occurred before. And you will not find in the way of Allah any change.

لَن تَنفَعَكُمُ أَرْحَامُكُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُكُمْ^ط يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُفَصِّلُ بَيْنَكُمْ^ط وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ 60:3

Translation: Your relatives or your children will not benefit you; the Day of Resurrection He will judge between you. And Allah, of what you do, is Seeing.

يَهْدِي إِلَى الرُّشْدِ فَآمَنَّا بِهِ^ط وَلَن نُشْرِكَ بِرَبِّنَا أَحَدًا 72:2

Translation: It guides to the right course, and we have believed in it. And we will not associate with our Lord anyone.

وَأَنَّا ظَنَنَّا أَن لَّن نَقُولَ الْإِنسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا 72:5

Translation: And we had thought that mankind and the jinn would not speak about Allah a lie.

وَأَنَّهُمْ ظَنُّوا كَمَا ظَنَنْتُمْ أَن لَّن يَبْعَثَ اللَّهُ أَحَدًا 72:7

Translation: And they had thought, as you thought, that Allah would not send anyone [as a messenger].

وَأَنَّا ظَنَنَّا أَن لَّن نُّعْجِزَ اللَّهَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَن نُّعْجِزَهُ هَرَبًا 72:12

Translation: And we have become certain that we will not cause failure to Allah upon earth, nor can we escape Him by flight.

قُلْ إِنِّي لَن يُجِيرَنِي مِنَ اللَّهِ أَحَدٌ وَلَن أَجِدَ مِنْ دُونِهِ مُلْتَحَدًا 72:22

Translation: Say, "Indeed, there will not protect me from Allah anyone [if I should disobey], nor will I find in other than Him a refuge.

إِنَّهُ ظَنَّ أَن لَّنْ يَحُورَ 84:14

Translation: Indeed, he had thought he would never return [to Allah].

أَيَحْسَبُ أَن لَّنْ يَفْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ أَحَدٌ 90:5

Translation: Does he think that never will anyone overcome him?

Having looked at the instances in the Qur'an that go in favor of the simple negative future, and having discussed what principle each verse falls under, we can now look at the scant evidence that goes against this meaning, together with the principles that operate on each piece of evidence.

As stated previously, for the perpetual future to be limited temporally really runs contrary to common sense, for what would be the purpose of using indicating perpetuity in the first place? However, 5:24 does seem to be an exception to this rule. Let us revisit it.

قَالُوا يَا مُوسَى إِنَّا لَن نَدْخُلُهَا أَبَدًا مَا دَامُوا فِيهَا فَادْهَبْ أَنْتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلَا إِنَّا هَاهُنَا قَاعِدُونَ 5:24

Translation: They said, "O Moses, indeed we will not enter it, ever, as long as they are within it; so go, you and your Lord, and fight. Indeed, we are remaining right here."

This seems to clearly indicate that the author of the Qur'an did not feel it contrary to the dictates of common sense to limit a perpetual future in some way. This, then, would seem to wreak havoc on the aforementioned principle. Nonetheless, our rule stands weakened but can hardly be considered invalidated. So, overall, this instance has the effect of lessening the importance of the many verses quoted as being indicative of *lan*'s being devoid of perpetuity due to its occurrence with a temporal limit of some sort.

Sometimes, but not always, it is possible to avoid *lan* and still express the negative future in an unambiguous way (unambiguous in the sense that the tense is clearly the future alone and not the present). If a verse uses *lan* despite this possibility, it seems to militate against *lan* denoting mere negation of the future, for if that were the intended meaning, the verse *could* have been phrased differently. Thus, we have

وَمَا يَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلَنْ يُكْفَرُوهُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالْمُتَّقِينَ 3:115

Translation: And whatever good they do – it will not be removed from them. And Allah is Knowing of the righteous.

This could just as easily have been phrased وَمَا يَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ لَا يُكْفَرُوهُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِالْمُتَّقِينَ. (The verb would still have looked the same because it would be in the jussive, and in this specific case the jussive and subjunctive are identical.) The meaning would have been exactly the same, but the author still chose to use *لن*. The *ف*, of course, was added because the rule is that when an apodosis has not been put in the jussive by virtue of being the apodosis, then a *ف* must be inserted to link it to the protasis.

إِن تَسْتَفِيحُوا فَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ الْفَتْحُ وَإِن تَنْتَهُوا فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَإِن تَعُودُوا نَعُدْ وَإِن تُغْنِي عَنْكُمْ فِئَتُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَوْ كَثُرَتْ
وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ 8:19

Translation: If you [disbelievers] seek the victory - the defeat has come to you. And if you desist [from hostilities], it is best for you; but if you return [to war], We will return, and you will not be availed by your [large] company at all, even if it should increase; and [that is] because Allah is with the believers.

Once more, the verb could have just been put in the jussive preceded by the negative particle لا, and the meaning would have been exactly the same. Of course, here the jussive does *not* look the same as the subjunctive, and would be لا تُغْنِ. The verb would have been in the jussive by virtue of being linked by the coordinating conjunction و with the verb that constitutes the apodosis, namely نعد.

Both these verses hint that لن contains more than just the meaning of future negativity. However, just what that additional meaning is is still not clear in the first case. In the second case, since we already ruled out the meaning of emphasis when we first discussed this verse, we can now conclude that the only possibility is perpetuity.

Another principle that can help us is that when perpetuity is being discussed in the context of the verb, the verb is more likely to contain the same meaning. Thus, we have

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَنْ تُغْنِي عَنْهُمْ أَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَا أَوْلَادُهُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ شَيْئًا وَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ 3:116

Translation: Indeed, those who disbelieve - their wealth or their children will not avail them against Allah at all, and those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide therein eternally.

The last three words mean “They will abide therein eternally.”, and this would dovetail nicely with the verb لن تغني if it contained the meaning of perpetuity.

As mentioned previously, when contrasted with a positive verb, it would make sense for a negative verb to be its exact counterpart, with the only difference being in negativity as opposed to positivity. However, if the second verb contains emphasis, the first verb need not contain it. For instance, if someone said, "The Cubs will win the World Series." you could certainly respond with "They definitely will not win the World Series." Therefore, the fact that the second instance of بعث in the following verse contains emphasis does not in any way prove that the first instance contains emphasis too.

رَعَمَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنْ لَنْ يُبْعَثُوا قُلْ بَلَىٰ وَرَبِّي لَتُبْعَثُنَّ ثُمَّ لَتُنَبَّؤُنَّ بِمَا عَمِلْتُمْ ۗ وَذَٰلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ 64:7

Translation: Those who disbelieve have claimed that they will not be resurrected. Say, "Yes, by my Lord, you will surely be resurrected; then you will surely be informed of what you did. And that, for Allah, is easy."

In fact, the following verse clearly shows that the second verb's being emphatic does not necessitate the first verb's conveying emphasis.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَأْتِينَا السَّاعَةُ قُلْ بَلَىٰ وَرَبِّي لَتَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ عَالِمِ الْغَيْبِ ۗ لَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْهُ مِثْقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا أَصْغَرُ مِنْ ذَٰلِكَ وَلَا أَكْبَرُ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ 34:3

Translation: But those who disbelieve say, "The Hour will not come to us." Say, "Yes, by my Lord, it will surely come to you. [Allah is] the Knower of the unseen." Not absent from Him is an atom's weight within the heavens or within the earth or [what is] smaller than that or greater, except that it is in a clear register.

Have dealt with all the instances of لَنْ that occur in the Qur'an, we can now turn to the hadith corpus and see what it can reveal. It is a well-known fact that paraphrasing from generation to generation was rampant among transmitters of hadith, so it may seem

counterintuitive that I wish to look at the hadith, since one cannot be sure the words recorded generations later were really those of the Prophet Muhammad and other native speakers of Arabic. However, it is precisely because people paraphrased so often that it is worth investigating whether they ever paraphrased *lan* and, if so, what word(s) they chose as a substitute. If they always retained *lan* and never paraphrased, that would indicate there was no synonym for it in their mind. On the other hand, if they did substitute something for it, it would show that at least to them the two words meant the same thing.

Thus, in Sahih al-Bukhari we find the following hadith narrated by ‘Awf bin Abi Jamilah, who heard it from al-Hasan al-Basri, who in turn heard it from Abu Bakrah:

حَدَّثَنَا عُثْمَانُ بْنُ الْهَيْثَمِ حَدَّثَنَا عَوْفٌ عَنِ الْحَسَنِ عَنْ أَبِي بَكْرَةَ قَالَ لَقَدْ نَفَعَنِي اللَّهُ بِكَلِمَةٍ سَمِعْتُهَا مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَيَّامَ الْجَمَلِ بَعْدَ مَا كِدْتُ أَنْ أَلْحَقَ بِأَصْحَابِ الْجَمَلِ فَأَقَاتِلَ مَعَهُمْ قَالَ لَمَّا بَلَغَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنَّ أَهْلَ فَارِسَ قَدْ مَلَكُوا عَلَيْهِمْ بِنْتُ كِسْرَى قَالَ لَنْ يُفْلِحَ قَوْمٌ وَلَوْ أَمَرَهُمْ امْرَأَةٌ

Translation: Indeed Allah benefitted me with a word that I heard from the Messenger of Allah in the days of (the Battle of) the Camel after I almost joined the people of (the Battle of) the Camel. When it reached the Messenger of Allah that the Persians had made the daughter of Khosrau their ruler he said, "A nation that hands its affairs to a woman will not be successful."

The very last sentence is what concerns us, as it contains the word *لن*. As mentioned previously, we use Ockham's razor to assume that *لن* means only the negative future, a meaning that fits here. In other words, although the other two meanings would work as well, we have no reason to depart from our default meaning. Now, let us look at how other native speakers of Arabic narrated the same hadith. Thus, in Sunan at-Tirmidhi and Sunan an-Nisa'i we have

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الْمُثَنَّى حَدَّثَنَا خَالِدُ بْنُ الْحَارِثِ حَدَّثَنَا حُمَيْدُ الطَّوِيلُ عَنِ الْحَسَنِ عَنْ أَبِي بَكْرَةَ قَالَ عَصَمَنِي اللَّهُ
بِشَيْءٍ سَمِعْتُهُ مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَمَّا هَلَكَ كِسْرَى قَالَ مَنْ اسْتَخْلَفُوا قَالُوا ابْنَتُهُ فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
وَسَلَّمَ لَنْ يُفْلِحَ قَوْمٌ وَلَوْ أَمَرَهُمْ امْرَأَةٌ قَالَ فَلَمَّا قَدِمَتْ عَائِشَةُ يَعْنِي الْبَصْرَةَ ذَكَرْتُ قَوْلَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ
فَعَصَمَنِي اللَّهُ بِهِ قَالَ أَبُو عِيسَى هَذَا حَدِيثٌ صَحِيحٌ

The final two links in the chain are the same, but the one preceding them is different: Humayd at-Tawil. The sentence in question is exactly the same, which would lend some weight to the theory that لَنْ has no synonym. Just as significantly, the rest of the hadith differs considerably from the version in Sahih al-Bukhari, which means the narrator(s) of either this hadith or the previous one were not particular about the words they used, and this would lend even more credence to the theory that لَنْ has no exact synonym in Arabic.

Furthermore, in Musnad Ahmad bin Hanbal we have

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ حَدَّثَنِي أَبِي حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى عَنْ عُبَيْدَةَ أَخْبَرَنِي أَبِي عَنْ أَبِي بَكْرَةَ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ لَنْ
يُفْلِحَ قَوْمٌ أَسْنَدُوا أَمْرَهُمْ إِلَى امْرَأَةٍ

Here only the final narrator is the same, while the one preceding him is Abdurrahman al-Ghitfani. The sentence in question is different, for instead of ولو we find its synonym أسندوا. Furthermore, since this new verb is not doubly transitive (while the other one was), a preposition, إلى, is used. Significantly, لَنْ is still present. This shows once again that although the narrator(s) (of this hadith or one of the previous ones) were not careful in reproducing the exact words of the hadith, they still clung to لَنْ.

Then in another part of Musnad Ahmad bin Hanbal we find

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ حَدَّثَنِي أَبِي حَدَّثَنَا أَسْوَدُ بْنُ عَامِرٍ حَدَّثَنَا حَمَّادُ بْنُ سَلَمَةَ عَنْ حُمَيْدٍ عَنِ الْحَسَنِ عَنْ أَبِي بَكْرَةَ أَنَّ رَجُلًا
 مِنْ أَهْلِ فَارِسٍ أَتَى النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ إِنَّ رَبِّي تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى قَدْ قَتَلَ رَبَّكَ يَعْنِي كِسْرَى قَالَ وَقِيلَ لَهُ يَعْنِي
 لِلنَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِنَّهُ قَدْ اسْتُخْلِِفَ ابْنَتُهُ قَالَ فَقَالَ لَا يُفْلِحُ قَوْمٌ تَمَلِكُهُمْ امْرَأَةٌ

Although the first three narrators of this hadith are the same as those in Sunan at-Tirmidhi and Sunan an-Nisa'i, the narrator before them is different. It is quite significant that the word **لن** does appear in this hadith, having been replaced by **لا**. The result is that the indicative rather than the subjunctive is used, of course. However, that is a cosmetic difference. The next verb, **تملك**, is also different, and the word “woman”, **إمرأة** is its agent rather than direct object. Once more, this shows that either the narrators of this hadith or those of the others were not particular about the exact wording of the hadith. If we take **لن** to have our preferred meaning, we can see why a narrator would change it to **لا** or vice versa, for **لا** followed by the indicative can mean either the negative present or negative future. Especially in this context it is clear that what is being stated is a general principle pertaining to all times, not just to the present, so the meaning is virtually identical if we take **لن** to have our preferred meaning. This is not the case if we take **لن** to have one of the other two meanings, for there is neither emphasis nor perpetuity in this version of the hadith.

In another place in Musnad Ahmad bin Hanbal we have

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ حَدَّثَنِي أَبِي حَدَّثَنَا يَزِيدُ بْنُ هَارُونَ أَخْبَرَنَا عِيْنَةُ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ أَبِي بَكْرَةَ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
 وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ لَا يُفْلِحُ قَوْمٌ أَسْنَدُوا أَمْرَهُمْ إِلَى امْرَأَةٍ

Here the final three narrators of the hadith are identical to those in the first hadith from Musnad Ahmad bin Hanbal, but the one preceding them is different. The wording is slightly different between the two, for we have **لا** instead of **لن**. Once more, this seems to clearly indicated that our preferred meaning is the correct one.

In yet another part of Musnad Ahmad bin Hanbal we have

حَدَّثَنَا عَبْدُ اللَّهِ حَدَّثَنِي أَبِي حَدَّثَنَا يَزِيدُ بْنُ هَارُونَ حَدَّثَنَا مُبَارَكُ بْنُ فَضَالَةَ عَنِ الْحَسَنِ عَنْ أَبِي بَكْرَةَ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ
اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَا يُفْلِحُ قَوْمٌ تَمَلِكُهُمْ امْرَأَةٌ

The final two narrators are the same as the second hadith from Musnad Ahmad bin Hanbal, but the one preceding them is not Humayd at-Tawil but Mubarak bin Fadhalah. Since the wording is exactly the same, this seems to show that there was originally neither emphasis nor perpetuity, and this lends credibility to the hypothesis that لَنْ had neither of these meanings.

Last but certainly not least, we have the following hadith in Musnad Ahmad bin Hanbal

وَبِهِ حَدَّثَنَا مُبَارَكُ بْنُ فَضَالَةَ عَنِ الْحَسَنِ عَنْ أَبِي بَكْرَةَ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَنْ يُفْلِحَ قَوْمٌ تَمَلِكُهُمْ امْرَأَةٌ

The final three narrators are the same as those in the previous hadith, but the fourth is different: it is Hashim bin al-Qasim rather than Yazid bin Harun. It is quite significant that the word لَنْ has been used rather than لَا. Once more, this lends credence to our theory.

We can conclude by saying that based on the simple principle that positive statements should have their negative counterparts, it stands to reason that لَنْ is the negative counterpart to the positive future. Furthermore, based on many principles of linguistic analysis, it is evident that the vast majority of occurrences of لَنْ in the Qur'an support this hypothesis. The handful of verses to the contrary are vastly outweighed both quantitatively and qualitatively by these innumerable verses. Finally, the analysis of the variants of a single hadith lend credence to this theory as well.

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