



The Shifting Use of *Isrā'īliyyāt* in Qur'anic Exegesis and Its Implications on The Comprehension of the Verses on Jālūt and Ṭālūt Story: A Critical Study of Indonesian Qur'anic Exegesis

This study focuses on the use of *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives in three pesantren-related Qur'anic exegesis in Indonesia. There have been many recent studies to explore the use of *isrā'īliyyāt* in exegesis, but the analysis on the use of *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives, its underlying factors, and its impact on exegesis has not been widely discussed. By limiting to examining the use of *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives in the stories of Jālūt and Ṭālūt, this study revealed a shift in the use of *isrā'īliyyāt* from the validity aspect to the functional aspect. It also disclosed two functions of *isrā'īliyyāt*: the descriptive and medical functions. The descriptive function represents the moral content in the story of the Qur'an, which has an impact on the purpose of mentioning stories in the Qur'an as *i'tibār* (something to learning). The medical function, refers to the internal tendency of the interpreter to choose the story, and this function determines the pattern in the exegesis of narrative verses. The exegesis pattern in methodological studies is directed only at verses with legal and theological nuances, by excluding narrative verses.

Keywords: *Isrā'īliyyāt*, story implementation, Indonesian exegesis

Studi ini fokus pada penggunaan *isrā'īliyyāt* dalam penafsiran dalam tiga tafsir di Indonesia yang bernuansa pesantren. Gagasan tentang eksplorasi penggunaan *isrā'īliyyāt* dalam tafsir bukanlah studi yang baru dalam penelitian modern, akan tetapi analisa atas bentuk penggunaan *isrā'īliyyāt*, faktor yang melatarbelakangi, dan dampak pada penafsiran masih belum dibahas. Studi ini dibatasi pada pengujian penggunaan *isrā'īliyyāt* dalam kisah Jālūt dan Ṭālūt. Dalam penelitian ini, ditemukan pergeseran penggunaan *isrā'īliyyāt* dari aspek validitasnya menuju aspek fungsionalnya. Terdapat dua fungsi penggunaan *isrā'īliyyāt* dalam penelitian ini. Pertama, fungsi deskriptif, yakni pengungkapan kandungan moral dalam kisah al-Qur'an. Fungsi ini berimplikasi pada implementasi tujuan penyebutan kisah dalam al-Qur'an sebagai *i'tibār* (pembelajaran). Kedua, fungsi metodis, yakni kecenderungan internal dalam diri penafsir atas pemilihan potongan kisah berdampak pada kemunculan corak dalam penafsiran ayat kisah. Corak dalam tafsir dalam kajian metodologi penafsiran diarahkan hanya pada ayat yang bernuansa hukum dan teologis, tidak memasukkan ayat yang berbicara kisah.

Kata Kunci: *Isrā'īliyyāt*, implementasi kisah, tafsir Indonesia

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Introduction

There has been a notable functional shift in the debatably valid¹ use of *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives in Qur'anic exegesis in Indonesia. The data on Indonesian exegesis place *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives as an explanation to the stories in the Qur'an.² Stories in the Qur'an serve as *al-I'tibār*³ (lesson to learn), *al-maw'idah*⁴ (advice), and *al-irsyād*⁵ (guidance), and thus require more detailed explanations to capture their values so that they can be imitated. Positioning *isrā'īliyyāt* in its functional aspect means increasing the status of *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives from its originally intended status as a complement⁶ into one of the main instruments in Qur'anic exegesis. In addition, the tendency to choose *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives to explain the stories of the Qur'an may lead to changes of the intended meaning in the narrative verses. The shifting function of *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives in Indonesian exegesis indicates a distinctive pattern from the use of *isrā'īliyyāt* in various other books of Qur'anic exegesis.

Thus far, some studies on *isrā'īliyyāt* tends to address the issue related to the validity of *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives while neglecting its functional dimension. The literature review on

the studies of *isrā'īliyyāt* revealed three considerable patterns. The first pattern relates to the study of *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives as a false story. The label as a false story prevents the use of *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives in Qur'anic exegesis.⁷ The second pattern concerns with the study on the birth and of use of *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives in Qur'anic exegesis.⁸ The last pattern is indicated by the study on the infiltration of the false narratives of *isrā'īliyyāt* in various Qur'anic exegeses.⁹ The existence of studies on the last pattern was responded by another study that revealed the impact of the classification of Qur'anic exegesis based on the use of *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives and the methods used in determining the validity of the narratives.¹⁰ However, of those three patterns, there is no study to position *isrā'īliyyāt* as an interpretive device with implications on the comprehension of moral values in the narrative verses of the Quran.

This paper is intended to complement the shortcomings in previous studies by analyzing the shifting use of *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives in Indonesian Qur'anic exegesis from an explanation to the validity of the narratives to an emphasis on narrative function to explain the narrative verses of the Quran. This study is

¹ Muḥammad Ḥusayn az-Ẓahabī, *al-Taḥfīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 2007); Muḥammad Abū Syuhbah, *al-Isrā'īliyyāt wa al-Mawḍū'āt fī kutb al-tafsīr* (Cairo: Maktaba al-Sunna, 1988); Muḥammad Ḥusayn az-Ẓahabī, *al-Isrā'īliyyāt fī al-tafsīr wa al-ḥadīth* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, n.d.)

² Bisri Mustafa, *al-Ibrīz li-ma'rifa tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīz* (Wonosobo: Lembaga Kajian Strategis Indonesia, 2015); Misbah Mustafa, *al-Iklīl fī ma'ānī al-tanzīl* (Surabaya: al-Iḥsān, n.d.); Abd al-R'ūf al-Fanṣūrī, *Tarjūmān al-Mustafīd* (Sangkapura: Maktaba wa Maṭb'a Sulaymān Mar'ī, 1951).

³ Mannā' Khalīl al-Qaṭṭān, *Mabāhith fī 'ulūm al-Qur'an* (Riyād: Mansyūrāt al-'aṣr al-ḥadīth, 1973), 307.

⁴ Muḥammad Rasyīd Riḍā, *al-Manmār*, vol. 2 (Egypt: al-Hay'a al-Miṣrīyah al-'Āmma li al-Kitāb, 1990), 399.

⁵ Muḥammad Khalaf Allāh, *al-Fann al-Qaṣṣaṣī fī al-Qur'ān* (Egypt: Maktaba al-anjalū al-miṣrīyah, 1972), 78.

⁶ az-Ẓahabī, *al-Taḥfīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, vol. 2, 133.

⁷ Aisyah bin Abd al-Raḥmān, *al-Isrā'īliyyāt fī al-ghuzwā al-fikr* (Damascus: Maktabah falesṭīn li al-kutb al-masura, 1975); Ibrāhīm Khalīfa, *al-Ẓaḫīl fī tafsīr* (Cairo: al-Azhar, 1996); Ramzī Na'na'ah, *al-Isrā'īliyyāt wa-atharuh fī kutb al-tafsīr* (Beirut: Dār al-Qalm, 1970); Syed Mohammad Chaedar Syed Abdurrahman Ali Yahya et al., "Riwayat Israiliyyat dalam Tafsir al-Quran: Persepsi Penseyarah Pengajian Islam di IPTA Terpilih di Malaysia", *Journal of Quran Sunnah Education & Special Needs* 2, (2018): 1–10; Afaf A. Hameed,

"The Methodology of Tafsīr al-mubṣīr li-nūr al-Qur'an: The Only Complete Exegesis Written by a Woman (Nā'ila Hāshim Ṣabrī)", *Al-Bayan: Journal of Qur'an and Hadīth Studies* 14, no. 1 (2016): 30–50.

⁸ Ḥasan al-Syaqra', *Iḥḍarū al-Isrā'īliyyāt* (Tanta: Maktaba Taj, 1960); Binā' Jamal, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm bayn al-qudamay wa-al-muhaddithīn* (Cairo: Dār al-fikr al-Islāmī al-Ḥadīth, 2003); Ḥusnī Yusūf al-Aṭīr, *al-Bidayāt al-'ulā li al-isrā'īliyyāt fī al-Islām* (Cairo: Mu'assasa al-Zahrā' li al-da'aya wa al-nasr wa al-tawzī', 1991).

⁹ Az-Ẓahabī, *al-Isrā'īliyyāt fī al-tafsīr*; Syuhbah, *al-Isrā'īliyyāt wa al-Mawḍū'āt*; L. B. Maevskaya, "The Influence of Israiliyyat on The Teachings of The Sect of Early Anthropomorphists, The History of The Hanbali Madhhab and The Formation of Religious and Philosophical Views of Ibn Taymiyyah", *Innovative Solution in Modern Science* 4, no. 40 (2020): 39–64; Ibrāhīm Ilyas Adam, "Biblical Narratives (al-Isrā'īliyyāt) as Reflected in Modernist's Rationalist School of Tafsīr: An Analytical Study", *Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam* 19, no. 1 (2017): 67–112.

¹⁰ Ahmad Yunus Mohd Noor and Zahidah Zainal Abidin, "Perbahasan Isu Isrā'iliyyat dalam Corpus al-Isrā'iliyyat wa al-Mawḍū'at fī Kutub al-Tafsīr oleh Shaykh Abu Shabbah (1914-1983)", *al-Turath Journal of al-Qur'an and al-Sunna* 3, no. 1 (2018): 1–11; Ahmad Atabik, "Infiltration of Isrā'īliyyāt Stories and Mawḍū'āt in Tafsīr Fath al-qadīr by al-Syawḳānī", *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 21, no. 2 (2020): 389.





limited to the analysis on the story of Jālūt and Ṭālūt in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 250-251. Accordingly, three questions can be formulated in this study:

- How is the story of Jālūt and Ṭālūt narrated in the Indonesian Qur'anic exegesis?
- What are the factors that encourage the use of *isrā'īliyyāt* in the exegesis of the verses of the story Jālūt and kisah Ṭālūt in Indonesia?
- What are the implications of using *isrā'īliyyāt* on the comprehension of verses related to Jālūt and Ṭālūt.

This paper is written based on the underpinning argument that *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives can serve as an interpretive tool to explain the narrative verses of the Quran to get a clearer grasp of its lesson. Instead of merely explaining some historical facts, the story in the Qur'an is more emphasized on the reflection of wisdom.¹¹ The stories in the Qur'an that recount the experience of the people of the past can only be explained through *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives.¹² The explanation of *mufasssir* (interpreter) in the story is inseparable from internal tendencies, which has an impact on the resulting moral values. Thus, *isrā'īliyyāt* no longer functions as an ignorable complement¹³ in the process of interpretation, but serves as one of the primarily significant interpretative tools.

The shifting use of *isrā'īliyyāt* in Indonesian Qur'anic exegesis was selected as the research topic on the ground of its considerable use in Indonesian Qur'anic exegesis. *Isrā'īliyyāt* narratives are mainly used in Indonesian Qur'anic exegesis which are closely related to pesantren culture base and the interpreters (*mufasssir*) are mainly the 'ulama'. The pesantren-cultural basis is primarily indicated from the use of local languages with the Pegon script, which serves as the hallmark of the pesantren. The use of local language in interpretation aims to enable the audience to get a clearer grasp of the Qur'anic messages.¹⁴ The position of the interpreter who

has a strong social capital can better instill the moral values contained in the narrative verses of the Quran. The shift in the use of *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives in the Qur'anic exegesis produced by 'ulama' with pesantren cultural base has significant implications for the delivery of moral values. The use of this method is mainly directed for the Malay community who has strong imaginative-projective way of thinking¹⁵, which is known for their ability to translate stories into action.

This content analysis research is written based on two types of data: primary and secondary data. The primary data in this study were derived from three Indonesian Qur'anic exegesis books written at different times with the same category: *Tarjumān al-mustafid* by 'Abd al-Rā'uf al-Fanṣūrī, which was written in 1675 AD, the exegesis of *al-Ibriz li-ma'rifa tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Aziz* by Bisri Mustafa, which written in 1960 AD, and the exegesis of *al-Iklil fi ma'ānī al-tanzil* by Misbah Mustafa, which was written in 1985. These three Qur'anic exegeses books were selected based on the criteria of a pesantren-related cultural basis with the social capital of the interpreters as 'ulama'. The secondary data in this study were obtained from literature review and relevant research results.

This research was conducted in three stages: planning, implementation and data display. At the planning stage, the researcher arranged some questions related to the selected issue. These questions guided the data exploration process at the implementation stage. The data exploration was limited to the primary data sources that are compatible with the shifting use of *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives in Qur'anic exegesis, particularly related to the comprehension of the stories of Jālūt and Ṭālūt in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 250-251. Data were collected using mapping techniques to find trends and impacts from the use of *isrā'īliyyāt*. The mapping was displayed in the results for

¹¹ Riḍā, *Tafsir al-Mannār*, vol. 1, 399.

¹² Ibn Ḥajr al-'Asqalānī, *al-'Ijāb fi bayān al-asbāb*, vol. 1 (Dammam: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, n.d.), 263.

¹³ Taqī al-Dīn bin Taymiya, *Majmū' al-Fatawā*, vol. 13 (Cairo: Dār al-Wifā' li-l-Ṭaba'ah wa al-Nasyr, 2003), 366.

¹⁴ Islah Gusmian, "Tafsir al-Qur'an di Indonesia: Sejarah dan Dinamika", *Nun: Jurnal Studi Alquran dan Tafsir di Nusantara* 1, no. 1 (2015): 20,

¹⁵ Soemarsaid Moetono, *Negara dan Usaha Bina-Negara di Jawa Masa Lampau* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 1985), 25.





analysis using secondary data. These three stages were carried out to generate data to answer the formulated research questions.

The Stories of the Quran: Catching a Moral Value with *Isrā'īliyyāt*

The stories in the Quran are grouped into three: the story of the previous prophet, the story of the people and figures of the past, and the story of the time of Rasulullah.¹⁶ Judaism or *Yahūdīyah* in Arabic is a religious system based on scripture.¹⁷ The stories in the Quran serve to describe an event of the past, which brings constructive values for the reader or listener, touches the spiritual, intellectual, behavioral or verbal aspects, actions and life attitudes, and ultimately turns into a way of life.¹⁸ The Quran is a scripture revealed by Allah and has never been changed, but the application of its verses still depends on the needs and conditions of the times.¹⁹ The messages in the Quran are presented in Arabic, and thus it makes Arabic known as the intermediary of Islamic messengers.²⁰ Therefore, Arabic is also referred to as the 'language of religion'²¹ which represents Islam and its people.²² The study of the Quran for Muslims serve as a way to shape noble character according to the learning objectives.²³ By a complete recitation of the Quran or *Khatam al-Quran*,²⁴ Mus-

lims learn the value of faith, the value of worship, as well as moral values.

Moral and social values can be taught along with the general teachings of the Quran, *sīrah* (biography of the Prophet), *fiqh*, and Islamic history.²⁵ Islamic teaching commonly take place in *madāris* (madrasa), *makātib* (maktab), or mosques as supplementary schools.²⁶ Ethical and moral values, including Islamic spiritual values, cover the values of faith, humility, honesty, purity, respecting the rights of others, respecting parents, respecting fellow human beings, respecting teachers, friendliness, and generosity.²⁷ Even though the attempt to understand the messages of the Quran is prone to over-interpretation because the activity of reading and listening to the Qur'anic verses is commonly motivated by the reader's desire to reconstruct the meaning in his own mother tongue—not based on Arabic,²⁸ Muslims world-wide are generally inclined to hold the teachings of Islam as narrated in the Quran and hadith.²⁹ In practice, to foster high moral values and discipline for individuals and society based on Islamic values,³⁰ it is recommended to apply *wa-saṭīya* (moderate) ethics which contains three fundamental elements: moderation, justice, and virtue.

The moral value of the verse is often clarified by incorporating *isrā'īliyyāt* stories, which help to

¹⁶ Otong Sulaeman, "Israel dalam Teks-teks Agama Islam", *Jurnal ICMES* 2, no. 1 (2018): 86-107.

¹⁷ Lukman Hakim Husnan, "Tuhan Yahudi *vis a vis* Tuhan Islam: Pembacaan Kritis atas Teks Taurat dan al-Quran", *Jurnal al-Dirayah* 1, no. 1 (2018): 72-83.

¹⁸ Ira Puspita Jati, "Kisah-kisah dalam al-Quran dalam Perspektif Pendidikan", *Jurnal Didaktika Islamika* 8, no. 2 (2016): 76-90.

¹⁹ Liyakat Takim, "Islamic Law and the Neoijtihadist Phenomenon", *Religions* 12, no. 1 (2021).

²⁰ Mohd Nasir, Muhammad Sahrir, and Mohd Yahaya, "Tinjauan Persepsi Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab untuk Tujuan Ibadah sebagai Satu Keperluan bagi Masyarakat Muslim Awam di Malaysia", *The Asia Pacific Journal of Educators and Education (Formerly Known as Journal of Educators and Education)* 30, no. 1 (2015): 1-12.

²¹ Komaruddin Hidayat, *Memahami Bahasa Agama* (Jakarta: Penerbit Paradima, 1996).

²² Yahaya, "Tinjauan Persepsi Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab"

²³ Mohd Aderi Che Noh and Miftachul Huda, "Understanding the Quran Resources as Main Principle for Family

Institution in Islamic Education", *Journal of Critical Reviews* 7, no. 2 (2020): 688-92.

²⁴ Huda, "Understanding the Quran Resources

²⁵ Irfan Erdoğan, "İngiltere'de İslam Eğitimi: Fırsatlar ve TehditlerIslamic", *Cumhuriyet İlahiyat Dergisi* 24, no. 2 (2020): 687-714.

²⁶ Erdoğan, "İngiltere'de İslam Eğitimi

²⁷ Eshanova Gulchekhraxon Numonovna, "Issues on Oriental Moral Identities in Islamic Religion", *International Journal of Engineering and Advanced Technology* 9, no. 1 (2019): 4646-4647.

²⁸ Matin Abdullah, Al Sakib Pathan, and Imad Al Shaikhli, "A Web and Software-Based Approach Blending Social Networks for Online Qur'anic Arabic Learning", *International Arab Journal of Information Technology* 14, no. 1 (2017): 80-90.

²⁹ Burhan Ul Islam Khan et al., "Linking Software Engineering Paradigms to Islamic Values", *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Information Technology* 95, no. 7 (2017): 1405-1417.

³⁰ Mohd Shukri Hanapi, Siti Mastura, and Caturida M. Doktoralina, "Wasatiyyah-Consumerism Ethics in al-Qur'an", *Internasional Journal of Finansial Research* 10, no. 5 (2019), 204-207.





elaborate on the details of the narrative. *Isrā'īliyyāt* are narratives developed from Jewish and Christian sources without any clear legal standing from either the *ḍa'īf* and *mawḍū'* hadith, false *ta'wīl* or fantasies of past stories that are inserted into the exegesis.³¹ The word *Isrā'īliyyāt* is derived from Hebrew which is addressed to the Israelites, or the descendants of the Prophet Ya'qub.³² This is in line with Sarif's opinion³³ that *isrā'īliyyāt* refers to narration and explanation from the Israelites. *Isrā'īliyyāt* stories are based on traditions, culture and stories told in the Israelites environment.³⁴ Then, al-Dhahabī divided *isrā'īliyyāt* into two: the legends originating from Jews and Christian sources, and those inserted by enemies of Islam into exegesis and hadith.³⁵ Alternatively, Tottoli³⁶ defined *isrā'īliyyāt* as a frequently used term in works and studies that are correlated with the narratives of the Qur'an and stories of the Muslim Prophet. Kahar³⁷ described *isrā'īliyyāt* further as a special term used by scholars of Qur'anic Science and Tafsir to denote the news, stories, traditions and doctrines identified with the Jews of the Israelites clan. Thenceforth, the scope of its meaning developed into anything that is assimilated into Qur'anic exegesis, both from the aspect of news, stories, and laws. In fact, *isrā'īliyyāt* includes everything that comes through Jewish and Christian thought. All these things are called *isrā'īliyyāt* because Jewish thought dominates over Christian thought.³⁸

***Isrā'īliyyāt* in the Story of Jālūt and Ṭālūt: Identification and Classification**

The tendency to narrate the *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives in the explanation of the content of Q

2, 251 is described in this section. The explanation for the trend to use *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives is explained in 3 models. The first model is a descriptive explanation which includes a complete narration of the *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives used, the form of citation used by the Indonesian interpreter, and the impact of the citation. The second model is a critical explanation that includes the reason for using *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives in the explanation. The third model is the transformative explanation that includes the interpreter's strategies in explaining the story.

1. Various Portrayal of *Isrā'īliyyāt* Narratives in Indonesian Qur'anic Exegesis

The citation of the *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives by Indonesian interpreters is based on the narration by al-Khāzin in *Lubāb al-ta'wīl fī ma'āinī al-tanzīl*. This narration is used to explain the story of Jālūt and Ṭālūt described in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 250-251,

Wa-lammā barazū li-Jālūt wa Junūdih qālū rabbanā afrigh 'alaynā ṣabran wa-ṣabbit aqdāmanā wa-inṣurnā 'alā al-qawm al-kāfirīn. Fa hazamūhum bi-izn Allah, wa-qatal Dāwud Jālūt wa-ātāih Allah al-mulk wa al-hikma wa-'allamah mim mā yashā'. Wa-law ḍaf' Allah al-nās ba'duhum bi-ba'd la-fasadat al-arḍ wa lākin Allah Ḍu-faḍlin 'alā-l-'ālamīn
So, when they went forth against Goliath and his hosts, they said, "Our Lord, pour out upon us patience, and make firm our feet, and give us aid against the people of the unbelievers!" And they routed them, by the leave of God, and David slew Goliath; and God gave him kingship, and Wisdom, and He taught him such as He willed. Had God not driven back the

³¹ Basri Mahmud, "Isrā'īliyyāt dalam Tafsir al-Ṭabarī" *al-Munzir* 8, no. 2 (2015): 157-78.

³² Mahmud, "Isrā'īliyyāt dalam Tafsir al-Ṭabarī"

³³ Suhaimi Mhd Sarif, "The Influence of Israelites Narratives in Business Research From Islamic Perspectives", *International Journal of Business, Economics and Law* 8, no. 2 (2015): 42-51.

³⁴ Mohd Sholeh Sheh Yusuff, Yusuf Haji- Othman, and Mat Rani Abdul Manaf, "The Source of Al-Israiliyyat Stories in Tafsir Nur Al-Ihsan: An Intertextuality Study", *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 8, no. 4 (2018).

³⁵ Muhsin al-Haddar, "Tinjauan Isrā'īliyyāt dalam Tafsir Mahasin al-Ta'wīl karya Imām Jamal al-dīn al-Qasimī", *al-Munzir: Jurnal Studi Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 1, no. 1 (2019).

³⁶ Roberto Tottoli, "Origin and Use of the Term Isrā'īliyyāt in Muslim Literature", *Arabica* 46, no. 2, (1999): 193-210.

³⁷ Abd. Kahar "Memahami Eksistensi Isrā'īliyyāt dalam Tafsir", *El-Furqania: Jurnal Ushuluddin dan Ilmu-ilmu Keislaman* 2, no. 1 (2016): 17-23.

³⁸ Enes Büyüç, "The Criticism of Some Evaluation and Assertion about Israiliyyat in Tafsir", *Cumhuriyet Dental Journal* 23, no. 2 (2019): 765-785.





people, some by the means of others, the earth had surely corrupted; but God is bounteous unto all beings.³⁹

The narrative verse of the Quran does not clearly explain the events of Ṭālūt's victory over Jālūt. However, Indonesian interpreters provide an explanation of the verse with three models based on the *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives: a short narrative model with an emphasis on the wisdom and prophethood of Dāwud, a short narrative model with an emphasis on the heroic aspect of Dāwud, and a long narrative model with an emphasis on the power of Allah in victory of Dāwud.

The first explanation was interpreted by Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Fanṣūrī in *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd* using the *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives, which emphasizes the content of wisdom and prophethood of Dāwud.

[qissah/story] When the distance between Jālūt and Ṭālūt was close, Jālūt challenged Ṭālūt to send someone to kill him. If Ṭālūt were defeated, he would certainly lose his kingdom over Jālūt, but if the envoy were defeated, he would take over Jālūt's kingdom. Hearing this challenge, Ṭālūt said to his soldiers, whoever could kill Jālūt would marry his daughter and be rewarded with half of the kingdom. However, none of Ṭālūt's army dared to answer the challenge, until Ṭālūt asked Dāwud about it. Dāwud then killed Jālūt, then married Ṭālūt's daughter and received half of the kingdom.⁴⁰

Dāwud's wisdom and prophethood in the view of Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Fanṣūrī was apparent in from his power and leadership over the people of Ṭālūt.

The second explanation was written by Bisri Mustafa who used the *isrā'īliyyāt* in a short narrative that emphasizes the heroism

of Dāwud who could defeat Jālūt's army. Bisri quoted the story as follows:

When the war broke between king Ṭālūt and king Jālūt, there was one of King Ṭālūt's soldiers named Isa who had thirteen children. The youngest was named Dāwud who was just a boy at that time. When the war was getting fiercer, many of Jālūt soldiers were killed, and Jālūt was furious. Finally, he went straight to the battlefield and shouted to challenge the enemy. King Ṭālūt immediately asked: who dare to face him? But no one dared, because king Jālūt was an extraordinary powerful person of gigantic stature shielded with armor that weighed about three dacsins. Then, king Ṭālūt announced, whoever dared to kill king Jālūt would be made a son-in-law and given half of his kingdom. Long story short, Dāwud was willing to fight against Jālūt, and he was able to beat Jālūt to death. Dāwud received his reward, married king Ṭālūt's daughter, and obtained half of the kingdom.

The heroic narration of Dāwud indicates Bisri Mustafa's attempt to put an emphasis on the moral values of Dāwud's experience in the verse.

Third, Misbah Mustafa used a longer *isrā'īliyyāt* narrative with an emphasis on the power of Allah in the victory of Dāwud. Dāwud's victory over Jālūt's army with his own hand was destined by Allah who gave Dāwud victory. Misbah explained it as follows:

[Note 251] As Dāwud was walking along with the rest of the army, a stone called him out and asked him to take it along the way. Dāwud brought the stone with him. After that, another stone also called for Dāwud and asked for the same thing, so that Dāwud had three stones. When the soldiers lined up and faced each other in

³⁹ A.J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (New York: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1996), 64.

⁴⁰ al-Fanṣūrī, *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*, 42.





the battlefield, Jālūt challenged Ṭālūt to send someone fully armed. However, not a single soldier dared to face Jālūt. In the end, it was only Dāwud who dared to face Jālūt. Dāwud was then given armor made of iron, an iron sword, and a horse to ride. Before facing Jālūt, Dāwud returned to Ṭālūt. The other soldiers thought that Dāwud did not have a gut to face Jālūt, so he returned again. Dāwud then said to Ṭālūt, if Allah is not willing to help him, the weapons he uses are meaningless. Dāwud wanted to deal with Jālūt in his own way, using a slingshot and three stones he found on the way. Carrying a slingshot and three stones, Dāwud confronted Jālūt. Seeing the weapons that Dāwud was carrying, Jālūt then said, did Dāwud think of himself as a dog, so that he was only armed with a slingshot and stones? Dāwud then answered Jālūt's question, that he considered Jālūt to be lower than dogs. Dāwud then prepared the slingshot by filling it with three stones. When he was about to throw the first stone, Dāwud uttered the words "*bism Allah Ibrahim* (in the name of the God of Abraham)", for the second stone, he uttered the words "*bism Allah Ishaq* (in the name of the God of Ishaq), while for the third stone, he uttered the words "*bism Allah Ya'qub* (in the name of the God of Ya'qub). By Allah's permission, the stone entered Jālūt's nostril, penetrated his brain, and came out of the back of his head. After that, the stone also hit Jālūt's soldiers, thus killing 30 Jālūt's soldiers. Seeing this, the remaining Jālūt soldiers fled. Afterwards, Jālūt's corpse was dragged before Ṭālūt, which brought merriment to the faithful soldiers of Ṭālūt.

Misbah Mustafa highlighted that Dāwud's victory over Jālūt and his army was destined by Allah's will and power.

Different narration leads to different meanings in understanding the message of the same story. The data revealed how the Indonesian interpreters conveyed the same story using three different narrative styles. Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Fanṣūrī provided a short narration with the highlight on the wisdom and prophethood of Dāwud. Bisri Mustafa described a short narrative with an emphasis on the heroism of Dāwud, while Misbah Mustafa narrated the story differently with a longer narration that underlines the power of Allah in Dāwud's victory. The three quotes with different narrative styles generate different implied messages.

2. Factors to encourage the use of *isrā'iliyāt* narratives in Indonesian Qur'anic exegesis

The characteristics of Indonesian Qur'anic exegeses are highly determined by several internal and external factors. Some of these internal factors include education and theological tendencies that surround the interpreter. In terms of education, Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Fanṣūrī obtained the basics of his religious education in Dayah (Islamic boarding school in Java) and he continued his education further in the Middle East for 19 years. He was known to learn from Aḥmad Qushashī (d. 1061/1661) and Ibrāḥīm al-Kurāynī (d. 1090/1690), well-known figures in the SHaṭṭariyah Tariqa, which thus shape Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Fanṣūrī's theological tendencies. This tendency is seen in his interpretation of Adam's creation in accordance with the doctrine of *al-a'yān al-sābita* (fixed entity),

Mention you, O Muhammad, when your Lord said to the Angels that I made man from clay, namely Adam.... So when I





perfect his creation and his deeds, therein is a spirit rather than mine.⁴¹

On the other hand, Bisri Mustafa completed his religious education in *pesantren* and continued his education in Mecca for 1 year. Bisri was more inclined with social responsiveness as indicated by his interpretation of the meaning of *ṣadaqah* (voluntary charity),

Ṣadaqah is only for the poor who struggle to uphold the religious teachings of Islam, such as reciting the Qur'anic (learning), teaching, and the like. This struggle prevents them from going out to trade and work for livelihood because they have to struggle to uphold their religion. Some people may mistakenly consider them as the rich because they never ask for anything. These people can be identified by some personal characteristics, such as having low self-esteem and others. Whatever you spend in the form of goodness, verily Allah knows it.⁴²

Although, Misbah Mustafa has the same educational background as that of Bisri, Misbah is more inclined to showcase his critical perspective to restore the Islamic understanding to the rules set by God, as indicated from the following quotation,

The author believes that there is no need to hold *tahlilan* (a form of dhikr ritual to pray for someone's decease) lavishly. The ritual shall be implemented based on the economic aspect and the religious rules. The purpose of the event is to send rewards of the recitation to the dead. This can be done without holding a lavish event. Thus, it is enough to pray for the dead by reciting surah al-Fātiḥa after each prayer, and give alms to the poor. All forms of *ṣadaqah* can be done by making up one's intentions and asking Allah to reward the deceased.⁴³

Hence, the internal factors significantly contribute to the interpreter's inclination in interpreting the verse.

The external factors, which also have an impact on the exegesis, are sourced from the contextual aspect of the text and the literature referred by the interpreters for reference. The short contextual aspect of the Qur'anic scripture that only explains the urgency of the events as indicated by the narrative *wa lammā barazū li-Jālūt wa Junūdih* (So, when they went forth against Goliath and his hosts), and continued with Ṭālūt's victory with the verse *fa hazamūhum bi-iẒnillah, wa -qatal Dāwud Jālūt* (And they routed them, by the leave of God, and David slew Goliath) raises questions about the detail of the events. The detailed explanation of the story was provided by *Lubāb al-ta'wīl fi ma'āinī al-tanzīl* as referred by Abd al-Ra'ūf, Bisri Mustafa and Misbah Mustafa in their interpretation. All three cited the same narrations used by al-Khāzin in explaining the story of the battle between Jālūt and Ṭālūt.

Despite the same reference, the influence of internal and external factors simultaneously contributed to the different quotation of the *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives. Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Fanṣūrī, who was inclined to Sufism, chose to portray a story that highlighted the value of wisdom and prophethood of Dāwud. In contrast, Bisri Mustafa, who was more responsive to the social dimension, decided to put an emphasis on the heroism aspect of Dāwud's story in dealing with Jālūt. Meanwhile, Misbah Mustafa captured the story by underlining the aspect of Allah's mightiness that allowed Dāwud to destroy the army of Jālūt. Thus, it is obvious that Qur'anic exegesis is highly influenced by the internal factors of the interpreters and the external factors of the text.

⁴¹ al-Fanṣūrī, *Tarjūmān al-Mustafid*, 458.

⁴² Mustafa, *al-Ibriz*, 46.

⁴³ Mustafa, *al-Iklil*, vol. 7, 3178.





3. Implications of *Isrā'īliyyāt* in Disclosure of Moral Values in The Story of Jālūt and Ṭālūt

The *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives has implications for the detailed understanding of the stories of Jālūt and Ṭālūt. Based on this narration, Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Fanṣūrī interpreted the verse with the following explanation,

(*Fa hazamūhum bi-iẓnīl Allah*) then they dispersed all the disbelievers with the permission of Allah ta'ala (*wa qatal Dāwud Jālūt wa-ātāyh Allah al-mulk wa al-hikmah wa-'allamah mimmmā yashā'*) and Dāwud have killed Jālūt and Allah granted Dāwud with the kingdom of the Israelites and prophethood and he was provided with some knowledge, such as clothe making and the language of birds.

Bisri Mustafa explained almost the same points by interpreting the verse through the followings,

Finally, king Ṭālūt was able to defeat king Jālūt and his army with Allah's permission. Prophet Dāwud killed king Jālūt. Then Allah granted Prophet Dawud the position of King and Prophet. And Allah Ta'ala taught Prophet Dawud the knowledge that Allah desired, such as armor making and the ability to talk to birds. Had Allah not prevented some people from being together with others, this earth would have been destroyed. However, the grace of Allah ta'ala is for all mankind on earth.⁴⁴

Conversely, Misbah Mustafa interpreted the verse by putting more emphasis on the context of God's power over the events that befell Jālūt. Misbah explained,

Finally, Ṭālūt and his army were able to defeat Jālūt and his army – Jālūt and his army ran away according to Allah's will. Dāwud, one of the sons of Ṭālūt's army,

was able to kill the king of Jālūt. Dāwud was given knowledge in accordance with God's will such as the ability to talk to birds, and so on. Had there been no intervention from Allah in the arbitrary actions of human beings, the earth would have been destroyed. However, the grace of Allah is for the whole universe.⁴⁵

The *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives give a more detailed explanation of stories in the Quran by emphasizing the moral values as an exemplary.

The freedom to use the narration without being limited to the aspect of its validity influences the explanation of other vague verses by including stories from various narrations to get a clearer grasp of the meaning. Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Fanṣūrī used the narration without regardless of the validity of the narration in the story of Hābil's burial of his brother,⁴⁶ Bisri Mustafa used the story of how Abū Jahl's intimidated the Prophet and the way Hamzā defended him as a way to explain Q 6, 122, and Misbah Mustafa referred to *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives to explain the occurrence of Ḥawā' from Ādam's rib. The use of narrative in interpretation is no longer related to the quality of the narrative, but more to its function in explaining the meaning of the Qur'an, especially with regard to the stories of the people of the past.

These two implications denote that the use of the *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives in Qur'anic exegesis does not depend on the quality of the narrative, but is related to its function in explaining the narrative verse of the Quran. Abd al-Ra'ūf al-Fanṣūrī, Bisri Mustafa, and Misbah Mustafa used *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives to explain a general story. The flexibility of understanding the use of narratives leads to its use in various verses which still require a more detailed explanation. Thus, the need to use *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives is not limited to the

⁴⁴ Mustafa, *al-Ibrīz*, 41.

⁴⁵ Mustafa, *al-Iklīl*, vol. 1, 279.

⁴⁶ al-Fanṣūrī, *Tarjumān al-Mustafīd*, 113.





conditions specified in the study of classical interpretation of the Quran, but is based on its function in explaining the Quran.

Reevaluating *Isrā'īliyyāt* Narratives: Implications for Quranic Interpretation and Moral Comprehension

This study shows the significant contribution of the *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives in explaining the Qur'anic verses regarding to events of the past. The use of *riwāya* is driven by the need for a detailed explanation of the story which cannot be found in various literature. The only available explanation is provided in the *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives. This view is in line with Sarif's opinion which stated that studying the *isrā'īliyyāt* story is useful for (1) dynamism, wisdom and literacy scarcity; (2) providing authentic narratives and valid sources of information about the stories of the past (3) providing opportunities for the academic world to study classical texts for learning purposes.⁴⁷ On the basis of this view, the use of *isrā'īliyyāt* as a tool in understanding the verse disregard the quality of the chain of narratives, but is more based on its function. Most of Indonesian interpreters took no heed on the need to trace the validity of *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives, which are widely considered as a "myth" since they put more emphasis on their function to explain and to get a clearer grasp of events mentioned in the Quran.

The explanation of the meaning of stories of the Quran always involves the interpreter's internal factors that inevitably influences the intended message. Interpreters with Sufism inclination portray piece of stories that highlight the values of Sufism, thus resulting in intended message with an emphasis on the dimension of wisdom. Likewise, interpreters with social and critical predisposition tend to present stories that

are adaptive to the needs of the community as a way to criticize the existing reality. This is in line with the view of Hans-Georg Gadamer, which stated that the intensity of the author is difficult to avoid in the interpretation of the text.⁴⁸ In another context, this view was also inserted by Abdullah who stated that understanding the message in the Quran is prone to over-interpretation because the activity of reading and listening to Qur'anic verses is commonly motivated by the reader's desire to reconstruct the meaning in his own mother tongue—not based on Arabic.⁴⁹ This is what makes the pattern that appears in the process of interpreting the story in line with the pattern that appears in the interpretation of fiqh (juresprudence) and theology. This condition has implications for the use of *isrā'īliyyāt* in interpretation, thus providing parallel position of the narrative verses with other verses that give rise to the study of lawn (pattern) in the interpretation method.

The use of the history of *isrā'īliyyāt* as an explanatory device for narrative verses is resulted from the limitation of strong information on the meaning of a verse. Additional information in narrating stories outside of the stories of the Qur'an is the only available choice of many interpreters,⁵⁰ even though the rules stipulate that certain conditions must be met.⁵¹ Forcing the use of narratives that do not meet the conditions may lead to flawed interpretation.⁵² The need for interpretation to the stories in the Quran for non-Arabic communities allows the shifting position of the *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives from the validity aspect to functional aspect. The functionality of this narratives in understanding the Qur'anic messages also shifts the position of *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives from being labeled as useless⁵³ to

⁴⁷ Zayed, "Knowledge", 45-62.

⁴⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (London: Continuum, 2006).

⁴⁹ Matin Abdullah, Al Sakib Pathan, and Imad Al Shaikhli, "A Web and Software-Based Approach Blending Social Networks for Online Qur'anic Arabic Learning", *International Arab Journal of Information Technology* 14, no. 1 (2017): 80-90.

⁵⁰ Muḥammad Abū Syuhba, *al-Wasīṭ fi 'ulūm wa muṣṭala al-ḥadīth*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, n.d.), 230.

⁵¹ aẓ-Ẓahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, vol. 1, 124.

⁵² Syuhba, *al-Isrā'īliyyāt wa al-Mawḍū'āt*, 113.

⁵³ aẓ-Ẓahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa al-Mufasssīrūn*, vol 1, 133.





something useful. This is in line with Muḥammad Abdu's view that the story in the Quran does not imply historical facts, but denote *maw'ida* (advice) and *i'tibār* (lessons) about ethics.⁵⁴ Thus, citing the *isrā'iliyāt* narratives can help disclose the values of Qur'anic stories.

The use of *isrā'iliyāt* in the study of the Quran and interpretation is a reflection of the need to deepen the stories in the Quran. The stories of the Quran contain ethical values to be reflected in the reader's actions and experience in everyday life. This view was also conveyed by Erdoğan who stated that moral and social values can be taught together with the teachings of the Quran in general, narrative verses, fiqh, and Islamic history.⁵⁵ The *isrā'iliyāt* narrative device is also used to explain the content of ethical values related to historical verses. *Isrā'iliyāt* has a significant impact on the expression of meaning that can influence thoughts and actions. Sarif⁵⁶ explained the same thing by mentioning three key elements to measure the influence of the *isrā'iliyāt* narratives, namely (a) citation of the *isrā'iliyāt* narratives; (b) the impact of the *isrā'iliyāt* narratives on thought; and (c) practice of *isrā'iliyyat* narratives in decision-making and action. The moral value of stories in the Quran can be reflected and implemented in action by using *isrā'iliyāt* narratives as a way to understand the narrative verses of the Quran.

The attempt of Indonesian interpreters to disclose the values of stories of the Quran through the use of *isrā'iliyāt* narratives also leads to the realization of these values in people's lives, which meets the objective of describing stories in the Qur'an as a lesson (*al-i'tibār*).⁵⁷ The people of today it can learn the lesson *al-i'tibār* from the stories of the Quran by referring to the interpretation on moral values. Without explaining the stories in detail, it is impossible for the readers to internalize the values of these stories to the fullest. This function is reinforced

by Jati's view that the stories in the Quran describe an event which ultimately leads to positive impact on the readers or listeners, since the meaning touches the spiritual, faith, intellectual, feeling or behavioral, and verbal aspects, deeds and attitudes to serve as a way of life.⁵⁸ There has been a significant need to provide more explanation of the story that can only be done through the use of *isrā'iliyāt* narratives⁵⁹ as a way to give a lesson for the people of today through reflection on the values of stories related to the people of the past.

Various studies on the use of *isrā'iliyāt* narratives in interpretation questioned the validity of the resulted interpretation. The *isrā'iliyāt* narratives are derived mostly from Jews sources.⁶⁰ Although some studies denoted the negative impact on the use of *isrā'iliyāt* narratives in interpretation,⁶¹ there is no current study to analyze the implications of these narratives on the comprehension of the stories of the Quran interpreted using *isrā'iliyāt* narratives. The use of *isrā'iliyāt* as a tool of interpretation has implications for its two main functions: descriptive and methodical function. The descriptive function is related to the extraction of the moral values of the narrative verses as reflection material, which serves as the primary reason for the inclusion of the story in the Quran. Meanwhile, the methodical function indicates that the delivery of moral values of the stories varies according to the interpreter's inclination in presenting the *isrā'iliyāt* narratives. The various emphasis on moral values affects the intended meaning of narrative verses, which methodically escapes the discussion of many researchers of interpretation studies. The study of *isrā'iliyāt* no longer refers to the debate over its validity, but to its function to explain the verse.

The requirement for the use of only valid *isrā'iliyāt* narratives in the classical interpretation tradition has restricted the use of *isrā'iliyāt*

⁵⁴ Ridā, *al-Mannār*, vol. 2, 399.

⁵⁵ Erdoğan, "İngiltere'de", 687–714.

⁵⁶ Sarif, "The Influence", 42-51.

⁵⁷ Qaṭṭān, *Mabāhiṭh*, 307.

⁵⁸ Jati, "Kisah-kisah", 76–90.

⁵⁹ 'Asqalānī, *al-'Ijāb*, vol. 1, 263.

⁶⁰ Syuhba, *al-Isrā'iliyāt wa al-Mawḍū'āt*, 12.

⁶¹ Rahmān, *al-Isrā'iliyāt*, 89.





narratives to explain the values of narrative verses of the Quran. Indonesian interpreters have tried to go beyond this restriction by using *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives regardless of their validity, and this effort helps disclose the various values behind Jālūt and Ṭālūt stories. However, this step has the potential to cause further problems, if there is no redefinition of the limits of *isrā'īliyyāt* validity. The given requirements for the use of *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives in Qur'anic exegesis should be reviewed, especially with regard to the requirements for validity. This requirement has limited the interpreters from explaining the moral values of narrative verses of the Quran, which will impede readers from understanding its core values since it is merely considered a complementary narrative. The need for redefinition is also supported by the development of intertextual studies, which allows analysis of stories based on the same story in other scriptures.

It is obvious that the old assumption about the use of *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives in interpretation, which will lead to flawed interpretation, is unreasonable. This paper, on the other hand, implies that *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives can explain the stories of the past people recounted in the Quran. An explanation of the stories of the past people will generate a detailed understanding of the moral values of stories or events described in the Quran as a lesson to learn (*i'tibār*) for the people of today. Likewise, what has been believed about the style of interpretation that only relates to legal and theological aspects is also unreasonable. The interpreter's inclination in choosing pieces of the story based on their personal horizon has an impact on the disclosure of the message in the narrative verses by adapting them to the theological and socio-cultural tendencies of the interpreter. This inclination produces certain patterns in the interpretation of the narrative verses.

Conclusion

By looking at the functional dimensions in the *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives, we can understand the

stories of the past people as a lesson to learn and to reflect their moral values. The discovery of the functional dimensions of the *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives is resulted from the application of the content analysis method in looking at the Indonesian interpretation literature, which provides a tool for drawing valid conclusions from the literature review of the primary data source. This method can answer the research questions and place *isrā'īliyyāt* as a tool of interpretation by considering its functional dimensions.

However, this study has some limitations since it only focuses on the stories of Jālūt and Ṭālūt in Q 2, 250-251 as the research object. This research is also limited to three interpretations that fall into the category of pesantren-related Qur'anic exegesis written by the interpreters having a social capital as the 'ulama'. Thus, further research is needed to accommodate the meanings in other stories mentioned in the Qur'an with more diverse categories of interpretations to get a more comprehensive picture of the use of *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives to strengthen the functional dimensions of *isrā'īliyyāt* narratives in interpretation.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with all ethical standards and did not involve direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Disclaimer

The views and assumptions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.





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