

Etymological Resonances between Hebrew and Arabic in the Aptronyms of the Qur'an: Uncovering *I'jāz Lughawī* through a Symmetrical Analysis of Meaning

M. Afif Wafiudin^{1*}, Abu Bakar², Moh. Yardho³

^{1,2,3}UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the phenomenon of linguistic miracle (*i'jāz lughawī*) identified through a cross-linguistic approach, specifically between Hebrew and Arabic. Both languages share a common genealogical origin, thereby enabling profound semantic and etymological connections. This phenomenon is evident when the Qur'an mentions the names of figures from the Hebrew tradition, forming a unique semantic relationship through an aptronym, namely a name that reflects the characteristics or narrative of its bearer. This study focuses on three main questions: how does the phenomenon of aptronyms manifest in the names of Qur'anic figures, how do Hebrew-Arabic etymological resonances reveal the miraculous dimension of language, and what are the implications? Using a qualitative-comparative linguistic approach and based on a literature review, cross-linguistic aptronymic patterns were identified in several figures: Zakariyā with the phrase *dhikr*, Ishāq with the phrase *ḍaḥikat*, Ya'qūb with the phrase *warā'*, Yaḥyā with the phrase *ḥanānā*, and Ibrāhīm with the phrase *abī*. These findings indicate the presence of etymological resonance that cannot be attributed to mere linguistic coincidence, but rather constitutes a manifestation of the miraculous nature of the Qur'anic language.

* **Corresponding Author:** M. Afif Wafiudin, (m.afifwafiudin2710@gmail.com), UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia.

This study makes a new contribution to Qur'anic exegesis through a linguistic-comparative approach, whilst opening avenues for further research into etymological relationships among Semitic languages in revelatory texts.

Keywords: *I'jāz lughawī, Hebrew-Arabic, Resonance, Aptronym.*

Abstrak: Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyingkap fenomena *i'jāz lughawī* yang diidentifikasi melalui pendekatan lintas bahasa, khususnya antara bahasa Ibrani dan bahasa Arab. Kedua bahasa tersebut memiliki akar genealogis yang sama, sehingga memungkinkan adanya hubungan semantik dan etimologis yang mendalam. Fenomena ini terlihat jelas ketika Al-Qur'an menyebut nama-nama tokoh yang berasal dari tradisi Ibrani, dan membentuk relasi makna yang unik melalui apa yang dikenal sebagai aptronym, yakni nama yang mencerminkan sifat atau narasi pemiliknya. Penelitian ini berfokus pada tiga pertanyaan utama: bagaimana fenomena aptronym termanifestasi dalam nama-nama tokoh Qur'ani, bagaimana resonansi etimologis Ibrani-Arab memperlihatkan dimensi kemukjizatan bahasa, dan apa implikasinya. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif-komparatif linguistik dan berbasis penelitian kepustakaan, ditemukan adanya pola aptronym lintas bahasa pada beberapa tokoh: *Zakariyā* dengan frasa *dhikr*, *Ishāq* dengan frasa *ḍahikat*, *Ya'qūb* dengan frasa *warā'*, *Yahyā* dengan frasa *ḥanānā*, dan *Ibrāhīm* dengan frasa *abī*. Temuan ini menunjukkan adanya resonansi etimologis yang, dalam kerangka keilmuan Islam, dapat dipahami sebagai manifestasi kemukjizatan bahasa Al-Qur'an. Kajian ini memberikan kontribusi baru dalam studi tafsir Qur'ani dengan pendekatan linguistik-komparatif, serta membuka ruang untuk penelitian lanjutan tentang hubungan etimologis antarbahasa Semitik dalam teks wahyu.

Kata Kunci: *I'jāz Lughawī, Ibrani-Arab, Resonansi, Aptronym.*

Introduction

The concept of *i'jāz al-Qur'ān* (the miraculous nature of the Qur'an) has occupied a central position in Islamic intellectual tradition and has inspired extensive discussions across theological, linguistic, legal, and scientific disciplines. In the context of Qur'anic studies, this phenomenon is classified by scholars of exegesis under the study of *i'jāz al-qur'ān* (the miraculous nature of the Qur'an). The miraculous nature of the Qur'an itself encompasses several areas, the most frequently discussed of which are: (1) scientific miraculousness (*i'jāz al-'ilmī*), namely the discussion of the Qur'an's statements regarding scientific facts that could not yet be empirically proven at the time of revelation; (2) legislative miraculousness (*i'jāz al-ḥukmī*), which discusses the Qur'an's

precision in formulating a legal system that is adaptable to various social and historical contexts; (3) metaphysical miraculousness (*i'jāz al-ghaybī*), which discusses how the Qur'an can inform us of past events and even predict the potential of various phenomena that will occur in the future; (4) linguistic miracle (*i'jāz al-lughawī*), which examines the uniqueness of the Qur'an's linguistic structure, eloquence, and expressive power, which transcend human understanding.

According to Muḥammad al-Ḥayānī,¹ The diversity of these miraculous aspects serves three main functions: first, as an indicator that the Qur'an is free from any element of falsity (*bātil*); secondly, as a source of spiritual and intellectual strength for the faithful; and thirdly, and most fundamentally, as a catalyst for the emergence of scientific studies and interdisciplinary intellectual exploration of the phenomena contained within the Qur'an.

In the context of linguistic studies (*i'jāz al-lughawī*), one fascinating approach to analyze is the phenomenon known in linguistics as an aptronym—that is, a name that semantically reflects the profession, character, or distinctive traits of the individual in question. One example frequently cited in this linguistic context is the name Usain Bolt, a Jamaican sprinter who holds the record for being the fastest man in the world. What is interesting is that the word 'bolt' in English is a verb (in some cases it can also function as a noun) used to describe something that 'runs fast' or 'moves suddenly', as in the phrases 'The horse bolted' or 'I need to bolt if I'm to get to school in time'.² In this context, the surname "Bolt" indirectly refers to his physical ability and his athletic career.

Another example is the renowned English poet William Wordsworth (1770–1850 AD). The name 'Wordsworth' literally means 'words of worth', which aligns with his identity as a poet. Such aptronymic phenomena demonstrate that the aptronymic nature of a person's name can possess a profound resonance of meaning. Based on the two examples above, this intrinsic connection can only be fully understood with adequate proficiency in English. Without an understanding of the lexical meaning or semantic nuances of these words in their

¹ Muḥammad al-Ḥayānī, "I'jāz fī al-Qur'ān: Ta'rīfuhu, Anwā'hu, wa al-Ḥikmah Minhu," ar.assabile.com, 2020, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200804021808/http://ar.assabile.com/a/al-i3jaz-fi-al-quran-al-karim-140>; accessed on 4 July 2025.

² David Rothwell, *Dictionary of Homonyms*, Wordsworth Reference (London: Wordsworth Reference, 2007), 72.

original language, the deeper meaning contained within them is difficult to recognize.

Based on the above narrative, a critical question may be posed: What is the relevance of the concept of aptronym in the context of the linguistic miraculousness (*i'jāz lughawī*) of the Qur'an? This question becomes all the more significant when considered in relation to one of the theories regarding the polemics of the Qur'an put forward by Orientalists. Theodor Noldeke, for example, one of the pioneers of philological criticism of the Qur'an, in his book **Geschichte des Qorāns** (**The History of the Qur'an**)³ claimed that the structure and content of the Qur'an were influenced by Jewish and Christian traditions. By conducting a critical-historical analysis of the structure of the Qur'an, he identified narrative similarities between the Qur'an and earlier scriptures, particularly in the stories of the prophets and earlier communities.⁴ In his view, this indicates that the Qur'an is not entirely original, but rather the result of an adaptation of pre-existing monotheistic traditions. Or, to put it simply, Noldeke argued that the Qur'an emerged within a broader Late Antique religious environment and reflected interactions with earlier Jewish and Christian traditions. From this perspective, certain Qur'anic narratives may be understood as adaptations of pre-existing monotheistic traditions. This study offers an alternative perspective by focusing on cross-Semitic etymological patterns that have received relatively little scholarly attention.

However, there is a linguistic dimension within the Qur'an that actually presents linguistic complexities spanning Semitic language families, which would be impossible for an ordinary person to construct, particularly in the context of the life of the Prophet Muhammad, who was well-recorded as being illiterate (*ummī*), let alone capable of learning languages other than Arabic. In the Qur'an, one can find instances where the names of figures with Hebrew etymological roots are mentioned, along with their meanings. One example is the words "*zaykariyya*" and "*dhikr*" in Surah Maryam, verse 2. The verse begins with the phrase "*dhikr*," which literally means "remembering God," before mentioning the name Zakariya. What is interesting is that, in Hebrew, the word

³ Theodor Noldeke, *Geschichte Des Qorāns* (Gottingen: Dieterich, 1860).

⁴ Hilmy Pratomo, "Aplikasi Pendekatan Kritis-Historis (Geschichte Des Qorans) Theodor Noldeke (1837–1930) dalam Studi Al-Qur'an," *Syariat* 4, no. 1 (2018): 10.

“zakariyya” means “to remember”. This is a case that is structurally similar to the concept of aptronyms outlined above.

This phenomenon suggests a semantic connection between the names of figures and the narratives surrounding them, indicating a linguistic complexity that has not yet been extensively explored in studies of *i'jāz lughawī*. It is within this context that the urgency of exploring the phenomenon of aptronymy in the Qur'an becomes apparent. Although studies on the miraculous nature of the Qur'an have been extensive, those focusing specifically on the phenomenon of aptronyms using a comparative Hebrew-Arabic approach remain very limited. For this reason, this research aims to fill this research gap by providing a systematic analysis of the etymological resonance in the names of Qur'anic figures. This is not only to address the criticisms of Orientalists who highlight the transcendental aspects of the Qur'anic text, but also to affirm the semantic richness and linguistic beauty of the text from the perspective of *i'jāz lughawī*.

In light of the background outlined above, this study will address the following research questions: 1) How does the phenomenon of aptronymy manifest itself in the names of Qur'anic figures? 2) How do the etymological resonances between Hebrew and Arabic in the names of Qur'anic figures reveal a dimension of linguistic miraculousness? 3) What are the theological and linguistic implications of the observed semantic correspondences in Qur'anic aptronyms? Based on these research questions, this study aims to: 1) identify and analyze the phenomenon of aptronyms in the names of figures in the Qur'an; 2) explain the etymological resonance between Hebrew and Arabic as a manifestation of the linguistic miraculousness of the Qur'an; 3) make an academic contribution to the study of Qur'anic linguistics using a comparative approach.

This study adopts a qualitative approach using descriptive-analytical methods through library research. This approach was chosen because it is suited to the nature of the data, which consists of Qur'anic texts and etymological analyses that require in-depth interpretation. The primary data for this study include the Qur'an, a Hebrew–Arabic etymological dictionary, and a number of relevant Hebrew texts from the Old Testament; whilst the secondary data include classical exegeses and academic journals relevant to Qur'anic linguistic studies. The analysis in this study was conducted in three stages: (1) comparative etymological analysis to examine the root words of the names of figures in

Hebrew and their connections within the Qur'an; (2) a contextual analysis of the narratives accompanying the figures' names; and (3) a symmetrical analysis of meaning, referring to the relationship between the etymological meanings of the figures' names in Hebrew and the linguistic context of their mention in the Qur'an, which demonstrates cross-linguistic harmony. Given the complexity of the study's scope, this research is grounded in a comparative linguistic framework (Hebrew–Arabic), the concept of anonymity in linguistics, and the concept of *i'jāz lughawī* within the Islamic scholarly tradition. Furthermore, additional linguistic observations are incorporated to provide broader interpretive perspectives on the phenomenon under investigation.

Discussion

The Relationship Between Arabic and Hebrew in the Semitic Language

Arabic is a Central Semitic language of the Afro-Asiatic language family, closely related to Aramaic, Ugaritic, Phoenician, and, of course, Hebrew. The language first emerged in the Arabian Peninsula, where early Arabic inscriptions dating from the 2nd century AD have been found. Over time, Arabic developed into several main forms, namely Classical Arabic (used in the Qur'an), Modern Standard Arabic, and various spoken dialects (*'āmiyyah*) spread across various Arab regions. The uniqueness of the Arabic language lies in its role as the language of the Qur'an. With Arabic serving as the medium of the Qur'an, its status and authority within Islamic tradition are exceptionally high and revered. The existence of Classical Arabic in the revelatory texts of the Muslim community has ensured its preservation, with virtually no significant structural changes occurring over more than 1,400 years. Even today, Classical Arabic is still frequently used in religious contexts and educational materials.⁵ This makes

⁵ Asrina and Ilham Ramadhan, "al-Qarābah bayna al-Lughah al-'Arabiyyah wa al-Lughah al-'Ibriyyah Lughatayn Sāmītayn: Dirāsah al-Lughah al-Muqāranah bayna Ḥurūf al-Jarr wa מילות (Milot Yakhats)," *Arabiyatuna* 6, no. 1 (2022): 285.

Arabic a rare example of an ancient language that remains in use in modern life, particularly in religious practice and Islamic scholarly discourse.⁶

Meanwhile, Hebrew and Arabic are both members of the West Semitic branch of the Afro-Asiatic language family, although Arabic is more specifically classified within the Central Semitic subgroup. Historically, this language is considered the language of the Israelites and their ancestors, although it is not referred to as “Hebrew” in the Tanakh (the Hebrew Bible, also known as the Old Testament in Christian tradition). The earliest written evidence of Paleo-Hebrew (a very early form of Hebrew) was found in the territory of the ancient Kingdom of Judah and is estimated to date from around the 10th century BCE. Hebrew is also the language of revelation and is highly revered in Jewish tradition, as it served as the medium of the Old Testament. The gradual compilation of the Tanakh over approximately eight centuries also documents the evolution of the Hebrew language across literary forms and genres, including epic narratives, religious poetry, law, and prophecy. This demonstrates that Hebrew served not only as a language of communication but also as a language of revelation and as the medium of ancient Jewish culture and civilization.⁷

Hebrew and Arabic are two major members of the Semitic language family, specifically the West and Central Semitic subfamilies. Both are believed to have originated from a common linguistic ancestor, Proto-Semitic, and have coexisted and interacted in close geographic proximity since at least 600 CE.⁸ According to Aedel Shakkour, when two languages are geographically close, they often share many etymologically related words, and this is the case with Hebrew and Arabic.⁹ As languages rooted in a triconsonantal (three-letter)¹⁰

⁶ Emile Zuniga, “Dear Duolingo: Are Arabic, Hebrew, and Persian Related?,” Duolingo Blog, 2024, <https://blog.duolingo.com/are-arabic-hebrew-persian-related/>; accessed on 5 July 2025.

⁷ Ahmed Mossad El-Saba, “Connections between Arabic and Hebrew,” Globalization Partners International, 2016, <https://www.globalizationpartners.com/2016/06/12/connections-between-arabic-and-hebrew/>; accessed on 5 July 2025.

⁸ Tasnim Swaitti and Krishna Yeshoda, “Phonological Change in Hebrew Words Borrowed into Palestinian Arabic in the Hebron City,” *Journal of Contemporary Language Research* 2, no. 1 (2023): 51.

⁹ Aadel Shakkour, “Hebrew Words in the Arabic Literary Works of the Author Shokeya Mansour,” *Hebrew Studies* 62 (2021): 292.

¹⁰ In Arabic, this falls under the category of verbs consisting of three root letters without any additional letters. According to the rules of morphology (Sharaf), Arabic verbs are classified into two types: *thulāthī mujarrad* and *thulāthī mazīd*. *Thulāthī mujarrad* is the basic form of the verb,

morphological system, both languages exhibit significant similarities in phonology, morphology, and vocabulary, though with some differences. Nevertheless, both Arabic and Hebrew have developed independently and have become increasingly distinct as dialects evolved across the Middle East, particularly in their grammar and vocabulary. Among the easily identifiable differences is the presence of quite noticeable morphological changes in Arabic.¹¹ For this reason, despite sharing the same roots, in practice, native speakers of Arabic and Modern Hebrew cannot directly understand each other's expressions.

To gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between these two languages, here are some distinctive features that highlight the "kinship" between Hebrew and Arabic in terms of their linguistic structures:

Similarities

As members of the Semitic language family, Hebrew and Arabic share very similar morphological characteristics, particularly in their affixation systems attached to word roots. This similarity is clearly evident when they add suffixes to distinguish between masculine and feminine, and singular and plural. The feminine marker system shows striking parallels, with Arabic using the letter "ي" (ya') and Hebrew using the letter "י" (yod) for similar functions. They also share similarities in feminine forms without explicit markers (e.g., pronouns using the letters ها or ت) and in specific suffixes that indicate masculine and feminine plurals, with consistent sound patterns (مسلمون/مسلمات). The pronominal system in both languages. The pronominal system (d}amīr) in both languages is efficient in both pronunciation and writing, with pronouns that can be linked to the preceding sentence demonstrating high linguistic economy through shared pronunciation and their connection to nouns, verbs, and particles.¹²

Another similarity is the use of the letter nun (ن/ن) as a feminine gender marker and as the protective nun (nun al-wiqāyah), which prevents unwanted

for example: ذهب – نصر – فعل, while thulāthī mazīd is the form of the verb that has had letters added to it, for example: أكرم – قاتل – استغفر.

¹¹ Arief Ma'nawi, "Ciri-Ciri Morfologis Bahasa Arab sebagai Anggota Rumpun Bahasa Semit," *Humaniora* 11, no. 3 (2012): 115.

¹² Ibtisam Jebur Mnehil, Ban Salih Mahdi Al Khafaji, and Rasheed Ghazwan Majeed, "The Impact of the Morphological Affixes in the Linguistic Economy' A Comparative Study between Hebrew And Arabic Language,'" *RIMAK International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 3, no. 1 (2021): 335.

sound changes in sentence structure. In the present tense system, both languages add letters to the root to indicate time, with Arabic using the mud}ara'ah (أَنيِت) while Hebrew uses prefixes (א, ב, ג, ד). This system employs complex morphological markers to determine person (whether the speaker, addressee, or third person), gender (whether masculine or feminine), number (whether singular, dual, or plural), and complex temporal aspects. Both languages also have a diminutive form (taṣghīr) to express small size, though with different pronunciation patterns. Another similarity between these two languages, as members of the Semitic language family, is that they are written from right to left, unlike the majority of scripts in the world.¹³

Differences

Although they share many similarities in their grammatical systems, Hebrew and Arabic have developed independently, resulting in differences in several aspects, including writing systems, pronunciation, and vocabulary. In addition to their independent development, these differences are also influenced by cultural and historical factors. All these factors likely play a significant role in creating increasingly distinct differences between the two languages. For example, Arabic still preserves many characteristics of the parent Semitic language family, such as tanwin, the nun letter in the five verbs (af'āl al-khamsah), and the dual form (tathniyyah). In Arabic, the definite article used to denote a specific or definite noun (isim ma'rifah) is the alif-lam, whereas in Hebrew, the letter he (ה) is used. Another difference lies in the use of the pattern فاعل to indicate the participle form of a verb, whereas in Hebrew, the form ל פ ת (lamed, ayin, pei, tav) is used.¹⁴

Meanwhile, the phenomenon of hybridization—the borrowing of affixes from foreign languages—has contributed to the enrichment of the vocabularies of both languages. However, in Arabic, hybridization is limited to scientific terms, particularly in medicine, chemistry, and linguistics. Unlike Arabic, this phenomenon is widespread in Hebrew. This may be influenced by two factors: first, the scarcity of words in the Hebrew lexicon, which led to the use of this method to enrich their vocabulary; and second, the fact that most Hebrew

¹³ Mnehil, Al Khafaji, and Majeed, "The Impact of the Morphological Affixes in the Linguistic Economy' A Comparative Study between Hebrew and Arabic Language."

¹⁴ Mnehil, Al Khafaji, and Majeed.

speakers come from various countries, including European nations, causing Hebrew to absorb many styles and terms.¹⁵

Meanwhile, from the perspective of script comparison, the Arabic script is not a “direct descendant” of the 22 letters of the Hebrew and Aramaic alphabets—which share a fairly close resemblance in form and structure—but can be described as a “cousin,” as it is an indirect descendant of the same script system, namely the Phoenician alphabet.¹⁶ Although both are believed by paleographers to have evolved from the Aramaic script, Hebrew and Arabic scripts look very different. Standard Arabic script tends to be cursive and flowing, whereas Hebrew script appears more rigid and geometric. This difference may be due to the fact that the Arabic script did not develop directly from the Aramaic script, but instead took a detour, first evolving into the Nabataean script. This contrasts with the Hebrew script, which developed directly from the early form of the Aramaic script.¹⁷

In terms of orthography, Arabic script is more complex and takes longer to process visually than Hebrew script, which is simpler. However, the consistency of the relationship between phonemes and letters in Arabic is higher, so Arab children find it easier to learn to spell than Hebrew children, who must rely on morphological knowledge because many phonemes can be written with several different letters. This has been demonstrated in research involving several children, showing that morphological awareness significantly contributes to reading performance. The study demonstrated that reading ability is influenced from an early age by morphological composition awareness.¹⁸

Theoretical Foundations of *I'jāz Lughawī*

Etymologically, *i'jāz* (عجاز) derives from the Arabic word *al-'ajz*, which means “weakness,” as in the expression “*wa a'jazanī fulān*” (وأعجزني فلان), meaning “and so-and-so rendered me incapable.” All linguistic meanings derived from the root “ع ج ز” fall within the scope of weakness, deficiency, lack of ability, and

¹⁵ Mnehil, Al Khafaji, and Majeed.

¹⁶ Maurício Carvalho, “Arabic and Hebrew Compared,” Google Sites, 2000, <https://sites.google.com/site/mopclanguages/arabic-and-hebrew-compared>; accessed on 6 July 2025.

¹⁷ Mille Larsen, “Arabic VS Hebrew - How Similar are the Two Semitic Languages?” Autolingual.com, 2025, <https://autolingual.com/arabic-vs-hebrew/>; accessed on 6 July 2025.

¹⁸ Carole El Akiki and Alain Content, “Early Sensitivity to Morphology in Beginning Readers of Arabic,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 11, no. September (2020): 1.

exhaustion in obtaining something desired. Meanwhile, in the context of the Prophet's miracles, *i'jāz* is defined as "something that renders an opponent incapable when challenged to match it."¹⁹ Thus, *i'jāz* refers to phenomena beyond human capacity—which are generally supernatural—bestowed by Allah upon His messengers to prove the truth of their message, wherein those who oppose or attempt to rival it will experience the inability (*'ajz*) to produce or perform something similar. Thus, the act of defiance or *taḥaddī* (تحدي) by the disbelievers, followed by their inability to confront or *'adam al-qurdrāh 'alā mu'āradah* (عدم القدرة على المعارضة), constitutes a fundamental element of this concept of *i'jāz*.²⁰

Based on this fundamental concept, a miracle must meet three essential and interrelated criteria:

***Kharq al-'ādah* (out of the ordinary)**

A miracle must be a phenomenon that defies the ordinary (*khāriq li al-'ādah*) yet remains relevant to the cultural context of the receiving community. Such a phenomenon must be something already recognized and well understood by the local community; the miracle then serves to surpass its challengers by taking an element from that familiar realm to a level far beyond the capabilities of ordinary humans.

This pattern is consistently evident throughout prophetic history. During the time of Prophet Mūsā, the practice of sorcery was an integral part of local society (ancient Egypt). Prophet Mūsā was then sent with miracles that surpassed the capabilities of sorcery, ultimately defeating even the most skilled sorcerers. This occurred when Pharaoh invited renowned sorcerers to duel with Prophet Mūsā, yet Mūsā's staff swallowed up all their magical feats. Similarly, during the time of Prophet Īsā, the field of medicine flourished among the Israelites. Prophet Īsā was then sent with healing miracles that surpassed conventional medical capabilities, such as curing congenital blindness and leprosy—conditions that had never been resolved by the medical experts of his time. Ultimately, Prophet Īsā was able to raise the dead—a feat that no medical science could ever match.²¹

¹⁹ 'Adnān Maḥdī Sulṭān Al-Dalīmī, *al-I'jāz al-Balāghī fi al-Qissah al-Qur'āniyyah: Dirāsah fi Suwar al-Ṭṭawāsīn* (Amman: Dār al-Ghaydā', 2018), 13.

²⁰ 'Alī Muḥammad Muḥammad al-Ṣalābī, *al-Mu'jizah al-Khālīdah: al-I'jāz al-Ilmī fi al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* (Amman: Markaz al-Kitāb al-Akadīmī, 2012), 7.

²¹ Aḥmad Muḥammad Amīn Ismā'īl, *al-I'jāz al-Balāghī li Taḥawwulāt al-Naẓm al-Qur'ānī fi al-Alfā* (Beirut: Dār al Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 2011), 13.

In the context of the life of the Prophet Muhammad, the Arab people were known for their mastery of rhetorical eloquence (*faṣāḥah*) and literary artistry (*balāghah*). The Prophet Muhammad was then sent with the Qur'an, which possesses rhetorical excellence and eloquence far surpassing human capability, thereby silencing even the most eloquent of *khuṭabā* (orators), *shu'arā* (poets), and linguists.²²

The miracle of the Qur'an bestowed upon the Prophet Muhammad is unique compared to the miracles that came through the prophets and messengers before him. Previous miracles ended with the passing of the prophets who brought them, whereas the miracle of the Prophet Muhammad is eternal until the Day of Judgment. The Qur'an will remain as an eternal miracle until Allah takes back His revelation from the earth, as mentioned in the hadith: "The Day of Judgment will not come until Allah takes the Qur'an from the people of the earth; then all that will remain are the ignorant and their oppressive rulers who do not know the truth and do not condemn falsehood."²³

al-Taḥaddī (Challenge)

A miracle must be accompanied by an explicit challenge (*taḥaddā*) from the prophet to his opponents. That is, the Prophet presents a sign to support his claim to prophethood and challenges anyone he wishes with that sign. If the sign appears and they are unable to match it, his claim is valid, and his prophethood is proven. In the context of the miraculous nature of the Qur'an, a method of gradual challenge is applied. First, Allah challenges them to produce something similar to the entire Qur'an, but they are unable to do so. Then the challenge was reduced to ten similar surahs, but they were still unable to do so. Finally, the challenge was simplified to just one similar surah, yet to this day, no one has been able to meet it.²⁴

'Adam al-mu'āraḍah (non-opposition)

This means that no one can produce anything similar, so the miracle is immune to the possibility of imitation. As Allah states in Surah al-Baqarah, verse 24: "So if you cannot do so—and you will certainly not be able to do so—then fear the fire of Hell, whose fuel is people and stones." According to Zamakhsharī, this verse

²² Ismā'īl, *al-I'jāz al-Balāghī li Taḥawwulāt al-Naẓm al-Qur'ānī fī al-Alfā*.

²³ Ismā'īl, 13.

²⁴ Al-Dalīmī, *al-I'jāz al-Balāghī fī al-Qissah al-Qur'āniyyah: Dirāsah fī Suwar al-Ṭṭawāsīn*, 14.

contains two fundamental proofs of prophethood: first, the validity of the challenge as a miracle; second, the prediction that they would never be able to perform it, which is a matter of the unseen that no one knows except Allah.²⁵

If a miracle is something so extraordinary that its opponents are unable to produce anything similar, then the inability of Pharaoh's sorcerers to turn their ropes and staffs into living snakes, and the inability of modern medicine to resurrect the dead or heal the blind or those suffering from leprosy, serve as proof of the miraculous nature of the prophethood of Mūsā and Īsā. Likewise, when Allah challenged the Arab nation with the linguistic and rhetorical miracles of the Qur'an, He rendered them incapable of producing anything similar. In fact, to broaden the scope of the challenge even further, the Qur'an's challenge was directed not only at the Arab people but also at all of humanity, including the jinn; yet they were unable to produce anything similar (QS. al-Isra' [17]: 88).

The Phenomenon of Aptonyms in the Name of Qur'anic Figures

Zakariyā

The name Zakariyā (زكريا) in the Qur'an is one of the clearest examples of the phenomenon of aptonymy—that is, a character's name that etymologically carries a meaning that resonates with the surrounding narrative or linguistic context. This phenomenon demonstrates the depth of the Qur'anic literature in its use of names that are not merely identifiers, but also carry meanings relevant to the spiritual and narrative context.

Prophet Zakariyā was a prophet sent by Allah to lead his people out of the darkness of sin and polytheism toward the light of obedience and monotheism. His lineage traces back to Prophet Ya'qūb, son of Prophet Ishāq, and he belonged to the Children of Israel. Genealogists still debate the identity of his father, with three main opinions: Hannan, Dan, and 'Adnan. He was the father of Prophet Yaḥyā and, according to historians, lived in the Damascus area and was there when his son was killed. Prophet Zakariyā earned his living through his own labor, trade, and carpentry, as reported by Imam Muslim.²⁶

The name of Prophet Zakariyā is mentioned in the Qur'an in seven places, spread across various surahs, including Surah Al-Imran, Surah Maryam, and Surah Al-Anbiya. The most detailed account of Prophet Zakariyā is found in

²⁵ Ismā'īl, *al-I'jāz al-Balāghī li Taḥawwulāt al-Naẓm al-Qur'ānī fī al-Alfā*, 14.

²⁶ Aḥmad Muḥammad Abū Shannār, *Ānba' al-Abiyā'* ('Amman: Dār al-Mu'tazz, 2022), 509.

Surah Maryam. Etymologically, the name Zakariya comes from the Hebrew זַכָּרְיָה (Zekhar-yāh), which is a combination of the root word זָכַר (zakhar) meaning “to remember” and the theophoric element *Yāh* (Yahweh) referring to the name of God.²⁷ The theophoric element is a term referring to the custom or characteristic of a name that contains an element of the name of a deity's name. Thus, the literal meaning of Zakariya is “God remembers” or “Remember Jehovah” – in Islamic tradition, this can be simplified to “Allah remembers.”

In the Qur'anic context, this phenomenon of aptonym is clearly evident when the name of the Prophet Zakariyā is mentioned in Surah Maryam [19]:2: ذِكْرُ رَحْمَتِ رَبِّكَ عَبْدَهُ زَكَرِيَّا (*dhikru raḥmati rabbika 'abdahu zakariyyā*). Notice how the verse begins in Arabic with the word “*dhikr*,” which literally means “to remember” – a connotation that subtly echoes the meaning of the name Zakariya in Hebrew, namely “God remembers.” This creates an extraordinarily clear reference to the meaning of the name Zakariyā in Hebrew, yet conveyed in Arabic, resulting in a satisfying symmetry within the text.

Unfortunately, in many translations of the Qur'an, this linguistic nuance is either not conveyed or lost because the word “*dhikr*” is rendered as “explanation.” This results in the marvel of symmetry between the meaning of the name and the context of the verse being diminished, even though the meaning of “remembering” in the word “*dhikr*” resonates directly with the etymology of the name Zakariyā. The phenomenon of aptonymy in the name Zakariyā demonstrates the depth and precision of the Qur'an in its use of language, where the symmetry between the etymological meaning of the name (“God remembers”) and the use of the word “*dhikr*” (“remembering”) within the verse's context creates a rich and interrelated layer of meaning. To fully appreciate this linguistic beauty, a deep understanding of the name's etymology and its linguistic context is required – an understanding that, unfortunately, is often lost in the translation process.

Ishāq and Ya'qūb

The name Ishāq (إسحاق) in the Qur'an derives from the Hebrew word יִשְׁחָק (*Yiṣḥāq*), a derivative of the root שָׂחַק (*ṣaḥaq*), meaning to laugh or smile. Its literal

²⁷ Amānī Abū Muslim, “Ma'nā Ism Zakariyyā,” mawdoo3.com, 2023, https://mawdoo3.com/معنى_اسم_زكريا/; accessed on 28 September 2025.

meaning is “he laughs.” This name refers to the incident in which Sarah, the wife of Abraham, laughed upon hearing that she would bear a child in her old age.

The story of the birth of Prophet Ishāq begins when Prophet Abraham returned to Hebron from the region of Bakkah (present-day Mecca); he received the joyful news that his first wife, Sarah, would conceive a son. This news was so joyful because the two of them had been waiting so long for a child, even as they had grown old. At first, neither Sarah nor Prophet Abraham believed the news, especially since it was delivered by two strangers. However, after realizing the two strangers were angels, Sarah burst into laughter. Yet, it was not laughter meant to mock, but rather an outpouring of joy mixed with disbelief, given her advanced age.²⁸

Meanwhile, the name Ya’qūb (يعقوب) in the Qur’an derives from the Hebrew יַעֲקֹב (Ya’aqov), which comes from the root word עָקַב (‘aqev), meaning “heel.” In Genesis 25:26, Ya’qub emerged from his mother’s womb holding onto the heel of his twin brother, Esau, and thus came to be associated with the act of “holding the heel.”²⁹ In addition to being associated with this act, the naming of Ya’qub is also closely tied to his appointment as a prophet following his father, Prophet Ishāq (Quran 11:71), and his birth as the second son of Prophet Ishāq—since, in semantic development, this name is also closely linked to the meanings “to follow, to succeed, or one who comes after (something).”³⁰

The phenomenon of aptronymy associated with these two names is found in Surah Hud [11]:71 as follows:

وَأَمْرًا تَنْتَهُ قَائِمَةٌ فَضَحِكَتْ فَبَشَّرْنَاهَا بِإِسْحَاقَ وَمِنْ وَرَاءِ إِسْحَاقَ يَعْقُوبَ

“And his wife was standing (behind him), and she laughed; so We gave her the good news of (the birth of) Ishāq, and after Ishāq (will come) Ya’qūb.”

This verse contains two aptronyms simultaneously, arranged in a manner congruent with the narrative context and the etymological meaning of each name. First, the phrase *faḍahikat* (فَضَحِكَتْ, "and she laughed") appears immediately before the mention of the name Ishāq — a name that etymologically means “he

²⁸ Mu’arif, *Monoteisme Samawi Autentik* (Yogyakarta: Diva Press Group, 2018), 110–11.

²⁹ ‘Ishām al-Dīn Ḥifnī Nāṣif, *Miḥnā al-Tawrah ‘alā Ayydī al-Yahūd* (Giza: Wakālah al-Ṣaḥāfah al-‘Arabiyyah, 2025), 64.

³⁰ Abdullāh Ibrāhīm, *‘Ilm al-Qurūn al-Wuṣṭā fi A’yun al-Muslimīn* (Beirut: al-Mu’assasah al-‘Arabiyyah li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr, 2007), 220.

laughed.” Second, the phrase *warā'i Ishāq* (وَرَاءِ إِسْحَاقَ, “and from behind Ishāq [will be born]”) appears immediately before the mention of the name Ya'qūb — a name that etymologically means “the one who comes after.”

This phenomenon demonstrates a clear connection between the etymological meaning of the name Ishāq (laughter) and Sarah's situation as described in the verse when she received the good news of the birth. This creates a strong semantic symmetry—the character's name is not merely a marker of identity, but also aligns with the emotional context surrounding his birth. As for the name Ya'qūb, its mention immediately follows the name Ishāq in the verse's structure: *wa min warā'i Ishāq Ya'qūb* (وَمِنْ وَرَاءِ إِسْحَاقَ يَعْقُوبَ) “and from Ishāq [will be born] Ya'qūb”). Symbolically, the phrase *warā'i* resonates with or echoes the etymological meaning of Ya'qūb as “the one who follows,” as if to affirm that Ya'qūb's existence indeed followed that of his older brother, Esau, and that he was appointed a prophet after his father, Prophet Ishāq.

Thus, these two names form a complementary pair of epithets: Ishaq is associated with the incident of laughter, while Ya'qūb is associated with his status as the second son and prophet after his father. This symmetry of meaning demonstrates the precision with which the Qur'an selects and arranges phrases. Phrases are not placed randomly or haphazardly, but are presented within a narrative constellation that harmonizes with their etymological meanings. From the perspective of linguistic miracle (*i'jāz lughawī*), this affirms that the Qur'an possesses an expressive power that weaves linguistic elements across Semitic languages into a harmonious unity. Meanwhile, from a theological perspective, this text reinforces God's message to Prophet Ibrahim and his wife that they were promised not only a noble lineage but also one rich in symbolism embedded in the names of their descendants.

Yaḥyā

Prophet Yaḥyā was the only son of Prophet Zakariyā. His birth was a manifestation of God's extraordinary power, as Prophet Zakariyā was already advanced in age and his wife was barren and had reached menopause. When Prophet Yaḥyā was born, the Israelites were under Roman occupation. Herod, who was king of Palestine, represented the Roman Empire in the region. Under his leadership, the Palestinian people suffered greatly because he was known as

an authoritarian, cruel, and ruthless leader, seemingly devoid of any sense of humanity. The harsh pressure of the government regime caused the Israelites to split into two groups: the majority were those who did not acknowledge Allah as God, as taught by Prophet Mūsā, while the minority were those who firmly held onto their faith in Allah as God and regarded the Torah and the Psalms as holy scriptures.³¹

Yaḥyā grew up to be a handsome young man of good character, renowned for his piety, having received wisdom from God even during his childhood. As a teenager, Yaḥyā also joined his father in his efforts to enlighten the people of Israel. He truly experienced firsthand how arduous his father's struggle was to awaken the people of Israel, especially when they formed an alliance with King Herod to halt the preaching of monotheism. Eventually, Yaḥyā was appointed a Prophet by God and commanded to study the Torah and convey its teachings to the people of Israel. Together with his father, Yaḥyā worked side by side to urge his people to return to worshipping Allah and to follow the teachings of the Torah.

In the Qur'anic context, Prophet Yaḥyā is mentioned five times in the Qur'an, namely in Surah Al-Imran (3): 39, Surah Al-An'am (6): 85, Surah Maryam (19): 7 and 12, and Surah Al-Anbiya' (21): 90. Etymologically, the name Yaḥyā originates from Arabic, from the root ḥ-y-y (life), which literally means "he lives." However, this name is also a form of the Hebrew name יְהוֹחָנָן (Yoḥānān or Yehoḥanan), which consists of two elements: Yahweh and the root ḥanan (חנן), meaning merciful, gracious, or bestowing grace. Thus, literally, Yoḥānān means "God is merciful" or "God's grace".³² The name Yoḥānān itself has an Arabic equivalent with similar pronunciation and meaning, namely ḥ-n-n. The shared root meaning between Yoḥānān (Hebrew) and Ḥannān (Arabic) confirms that these two languages share the same semantic resonance as members of the Semitic language family.

From an onomastic perspective, this profound resonance of meaning is found in Surah Maryam [19]: 12–13, which pairs the name Yaḥyā with the phrase ḥannān. Allah says:

³¹ Gamal Komandoko, *Riwayat 25 Nabi dan Rasul* (Yogyakarta: Media Pressindo, 2018), 158.

³² Halah Hānī Šūfī, "Ḥaḳīqah al-Nabī Yaḥyā 'Alayhi al-Salām fi al-Kutub al-Muqaddasa," *wordpress.com*, 2014, <https://halahani.wordpress.com/tag/اسم-النبي-يحيى-الحقيقي/>; accessed on 11 October 2025.

يَا يَحْيَىٰ خُذِ الْكِتَابَ بِقُوَّةٍ ۗ وَآتَيْنَاهُ الْحُكْمَ صَبِيًّا
وَحَنَانًا مِّن لَّدُنَّا وَزَكَاةً ۗ وَكَانَ تَقِيًّا

“O Yaḥyā, take the Book (the Torah) with earnest devotion. And We bestowed upon him wisdom while he was still a child, and mercy from Us, and purity, and he was a man of piety.”

The verse above mentions three primary blessings that God bestowed upon Yaḥyā: *ḥukm* (wisdom), *ḥanān* (compassion), and *zakāh* (purity). Based on the genealogical-etymological analysis of the Hebrew name Yaḥyā mentioned above, a precise symmetry becomes evident in the text of this verse. Notice how the Qur'an chooses a very unique word to describe what God bestowed upon His prophet: *ḥanān* (حَنَانًا). What is interesting is that the phrase *ḥanān* (حَنَانًا) is combined with the name Yaḥyā in a single sentence, as if the Qur'an intends to provide an etymological reference to the name Yaḥyā in Hebrew. In other words, the Qur'an not only presents the name Yaḥyā as a figure but also conveys the etymological resonance of that name through the use of the word *ḥanān* (حَنَانًا) within the verse's structure.

However, there is something even more intriguing about this finding. The word *ḥanān* is a hapax legomenon—a word that does not appear elsewhere in the Quran.³³ It is used only once in a context related to Prophet Yaḥyā. This finding highlights the depth of the Quran's linguistic miraculousness. The symmetry between the name Yaḥyā and the phrase *ḥanān*—which is also a hapax legomenon—is difficult to dismiss as an unintentional coincidence, as it links two semantic families (Hebrew and Arabic) within a cohesive linguistic construction.

Ibrāhīm

This study would be incomplete without mentioning the central figure in the Abrahamic faiths, the figure who marked the turning point in the emergence

³³ Hapax legomena is a term derived from Greek that literally means “(something) mentioned only once.” Hapax legomena refers to a word that appears only once in various texts, ranging from documents, manuscripts, specific letters, and even sacred scriptures. Analysis of hapax legomena is necessary because it serves as an annotation for unique and unusual phrases or terms within the text's structure. In the context of the Qur'an, the phenomenon of hapax legomena also appears with considerable frequency, particularly in Surah Maryam. Shawkat M. Toorawa has cataloged at least 10 words in Surah Maryam that do not appear repeatedly and are classified as hapax legomena. Read M. Afif Wafiudin, Moh. Yardho, and Muhammad Naufal Hakim, “Resonasi Leksikal Dalam Terjemahan Al-Qur'an Berbahasa Inggris: Analisis Alih Bahasa Surah Aṭ-Ṭāriq Shawkat M. Toorawa,” *JOURNAL OF QUR'AN AND HADITH STUDIES* 13, no. 2 (2024): 292.

of the three major religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). He is Ibrāhīm bin Tārakh, son of Naḥūr, son of Sārūgh, son of Rāghū, son of Fāligh, son of ‘Ābir, son of Shāliḥ, son of Arfakhshad, son of Sām, son of Nūḥ ‘Alayhissalām. The most well-known account among biographers, historians, and reports regarding the birth of Prophet Ibrāhīm is a narration authenticated by Ibn ‘Asākir, stating that he was born in the Ghouta region of Damascus, in a village named Barzah, on a mountain called Qāsiyūn. However, another opinion was also put forward by Ibn ‘Asākir, which he believed to be more credible: that Prophet Ibrāhīm was born in Babylon (in Mesopotamia, on the banks of the Euphrates River, which is now part of Iraq).³⁴

Prophet Ibrāhīm had several titles, among which the most famous is *khalīlullāh* (the Beloved of God) due to his extraordinary closeness, love, and loyalty to God, which he demonstrated through various severe trials—especially when he was commanded to sacrifice his son, *abū al-anbiyā’* (Father of the Prophets) because from him were born the prophets, including Prophet Muhammad, and one that is perhaps less commonly heard is *abū al-ḍayfān* (Father of the Guests) because he was the first to host guests with hospitality and always offered them food—especially when he served a calf to mysterious guests before he realized that they were angels. In fact, according to one account, Prophet Ibrāhīm was willing to walk a mile or two just to find someone to eat with.³⁵

In the Bible, the Prophet Ibrāhīm is referred to as Abram, and the name Ibrāhīm is the Arabized form of the Hebrew name אַבְרָהָם (Avraham or Abraham). In its original form, Abram (אַבְרָם, Avram) means “noble father” or “exalted father” (from the root words ab = father and ram = high/noble). However, after God’s covenant with him in Genesis 17:5, his name was changed to Ibrāhīm (Avraham), which literally means “father of many nations” (av hamon goyim). Thus, the core semantic element of this name is “father” (ab) attached to the concept of the universality of descendants and spiritual leadership.³⁶

In the Qur’anic context, the name Ibrāhīm is mentioned 69 times, and at least four of those instances are accompanied by the phrase “your father” or

³⁴ Ibnu Kathīr, *Qaṣaṣ al-Anbiyā’* (Kairo: Dār al-Ṭabā’ah al-Islāmiyyah, 1997), 167–68.

³⁵ Ibnu Ḥajar Al-Haytamī, *al-Fath al-Mubīn bi Sharḥ al-Arba’in li al-Imām al-Nawawī* (Kairo: Dār al-Kutub al’Ilmiyyah, 2013), 380.

³⁶ Sa’id ‘Abīdī, *al-Anbiyā’ Alayhim al-Salām bayna Iftirā’āt al-Kitāb al-Muqaddas wa Ḥqā’iq al-Qur’ān al-Karīm* (Yerusalem: Dār al-Jundī, 2017), 66.

“your father,” one of which appears in Surah al-Hajj [22]:78: *مِلَّةَ أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ* (millata abikum Ibrāhīm). This is where the phenomenon of aptonymy in the name Ibrahim becomes evident. In Arabic, the root 'b- (أب) means father, and the form *abikum* (أبيكم) means “your father.” Thus, etymologically and semantically, the Qur'an deliberately places the word *abikum* in direct proximity to the mention of the name Ibrāhīm, creating a resonance of meaning across Semitic languages.

The reference to *abikum Ibrāhīm* (“your father Ibrāhīm”) here serves both as a genealogical identification and as a theological statement, affirming that Ibrāhīm is the spiritual father of all Muslims—not merely in a biological sense but in a universal one. However, what is even more remarkable is that the word *abikum* here functions as a linguistic reference to the root meaning of the name Ibrāhīm itself. This means that the Qur'an indirectly “echoes” the meaning of the name Ibrāhīm through a choice of diction derived from the same semantic root, namely -b- (father). Unfortunately, in some translations of the Qur'an, the word *abikum* is often rendered as “your forefathers.” The researcher does not mean to suggest that this translation is inaccurate in terms of meaning, but it does result in a reduction of this cross-Semitic linguistic symmetry.

Regardless, this resonance underscores that the Qur'an not only mentions figures rooted in historical tradition but also integrates the name of Ibrāhīm into the verse's narrative structure of the verse. Thus, theologically, this juxtaposition reinforces the role of Prophet Ibrāhīm as a central figure of monotheism across generations and nations: “the father of the prophets” or “the father of many nations.” Meanwhile, from a linguistic perspective, it demonstrates how the Qur'an aesthetically inserts and revives the etymological Hebrew meaning into the classical Arabic language system—through the mention of the name Ibrahim—without losing its expressive authenticity.

Parallel Narrative Analysis (Intertextualist-Corrective)

This time, linguistic miracles such as the aptonym mentioned above will be explored in greater depth, specifically in the context of narrative parallels between the Quran and the Old Testament. Scholars from both Muslim and Western circles have noted narrative parallels between the Qur'an and the Bible—whether thematic, such as the stories of the prophets and messengers, or

ideological, such as the affirmation of God's existence and His oneness.³⁷ In addition to these two aspects, narrative parallels also occur in the similarity of sounds within speech structures, indicating the phonological closeness between Arabic and Hebrew as two major members of the Semitic language family, while further reinforcing the miraculous cross-linguistic nature of the Qur'an.

One particularly interesting example is the account of the Israelites' response to God's command in Surah Al-Baqarah [2]:93, as follows:

وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ الطُّورَ خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَاسْمِعُوا ۚ قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا

"And (remember) when We took your covenant and raised the mountain above you (as We said): 'Hold fast to what We have given you and listen!' They said: 'We hear, but we disobey.'"

At first glance, this verse seems ordinary. However, in the Torah, specifically in Deuteronomy 5:27 (Hebrew version), the Israelites' response to God's command is described using a phrase with a nearly identical phonological pattern as follows: וְעָשִׂנוּ וְנִשְׁמָעוּ (wə-šā·ma'·nū) : וְנַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָעוּ (wə-ā·šî·nū)—"We will do and we will hear."

However, in some sections of Jewish exegetical tradition (midrash and Talmud), this is actually a satirical commentary on the Israelites, who often made promises with their mouths but failed to keep them through their actions. Exodus 32:6 even recounts that while Prophet Mūsā ascended the mountain to receive revelation, the Israelites waiting at the mountain's base rebelled by crafting a golden calf as an idol for themselves.³⁸ the narrative portrays episodes of disobedience and covenantal failure among the Israelites. Thus, in this context, the Qur'an reconstructs their utterance in a corrective form: *sami'nā wa 'aṣaynā*—"we have heard, but we disobey."

³⁷ Mohamed, "Comparing the Quran, Old Testament and New Testament: A Look at Their Similarities and Difference," mohamed-phd.medium.com, 2024, <https://mohamed-phd.medium.com/comparing-the-quran-old-testament-and-new-testament-a-look-at-their-similarities-and-differences-526574d11da3>; accessed on 12 October 2025.

³⁸"Takut akan Tuhan," Sindoe Gereja Kristus Yesus, 2020, [http://www.gky.or.id/gema.jsp?gemaId=2175#:~:text=Mereka menyadari keberdosaan dan kehinaan,memiliki Roh Kudus dalam hatinya.;](http://www.gky.or.id/gema.jsp?gemaId=2175#:~:text=Mereka%20menyadari%20keberdosaan%20dan%20kehinaan,memiliki%20Roh%20Kudus%20dalam%20hatinya.;) accessed on October 2025.

When compared phonetically, the two phrases exhibit significant cross-linguistic sound similarities within the Semitic language family:

Language	Phrase	Transliteration	Literal meaning
Arabic	سَمِعْنَا وَعَصَيْنَا	sami'nā wa 'aṣaynā	We have heard, and we have disobeyed
Hebrew	וְעָשִׂינוּ: וְשָׁמַעְנוּ	wə·šā·ma'·nū wə·'ā·sî·nū	We have heard, and we have carried it out

These two phrases have a parallel morphological structure: both use the first-person plural form—*nā* in Arabic and *nū* in Hebrew—and are linked by a coordinating conjunction (*waw* 'aṭaf)—*wa* in Arabic and *ve* in Hebrew. Thus, the similarity lies not only in the verbal realm but also in the realm of linguistic structure. Thus, the Qur'an reproduces the response of the Israelites in a linguistic form that is phonologically parallel to their original language, but with a reversal of meaning from obedience to disobedience as a corrective based on their original response to God's command.

A More Universal Linguistic Miracle

The phenomenon of aptronymy described above—which focuses on Qur'anic figures and narrative parallels between the Qur'an and the Old Testament—can be recognized and observed only by those proficient in Hebrew and Arabic. However, the dimension of linguistic miraculousness is not limited to the etymological realm of intertextuality alone. Following the same pattern as the aptronymic phenomenon, the Qur'an also presents a miraculous quality that is arguably more universal and can be understood by anyone who sees or hears the text's structure, without requiring cross-Semitic linguistic knowledge as before.

In linguistics, there is a term called "palindromic," which refers to something that reads the same backward as forward. This phenomenon can occur in words, sentences, numbers, DNA sequences, or even types of diseases. The Qur'an also contains this linguistic phenomenon, for example, in the phrase

“كل في فلك” (kullun fī falak), which appears in several verses, including Surah Yasin verse 40 and Surah al-Anbiya’ verse 33. This phrase, both phonologically and visually, has a symmetrical structure that can be read from front to back with a consistent pattern. This palindromic phenomenon reflects the meaning of the verse: the orbits of celestial bodies move in an endless circular path along a specific trajectory. This is referred to in modern linguistic theory as the iconicity of form and meaning—that is, a linguistic form that mirrors the meaning it conveys.³⁹

This phenomenon of linguistic wonder is more universal than ever before, yet it shares the same underlying principle as the example of the aptonym mentioned above—the presence of a relevant implied meaning within a phrase. Several aspects that make this linguistic miracle more universal are: it does not require knowledge of Hebrew in the Old Testament to appreciate its beauty; it can be seen and heard by anyone who reads the Qur’an in its original text; and there is a harmony between the linguistic form and the cosmic reality discussed in the verse. Thus, with these three aspects, this miracle is general in nature and easier for the public to grasp than cases of aptonyms, let alone narrative parallels.

Thus, this discussion complements the two previous ones (character epithets and narrative parallels). Linguistic miraculousness is present on two scales: First, the micro and implicit scale—perceived only by those who are fluent in Semitic languages (Hebrew and Arabic), such as the names Zakariyā, Ishāq, Yaḥyā, and Ibrāhīm. Second, the macro-universal scale—recognizable to anyone, even without knowledge of Hebrew or Arabic, as in the phrase structure *kullun fī falak*, which physically reflects the meaning of orbit and cosmic order.

Implication

Based on all research findings regarding the etymological resonance between Hebrew and Arabic in the names of Qur’anic figures, narrative parallels with Old Testament texts, and broader linguistic miraculous phenomena such as the structure of the phrase *kullun fī falak*, several important implications can be drawn in three areas: theological, linguistic, and academic:

³⁹ Erenje Christopher Oko and Etete GregoryMbey, “The Role of Iconicity in Language Evolution and Processing: Bridging Embodiment and Symbolic Representation,” *Advances in Law, Pedagogy, and Multidisciplinary Humanities* 3, no. 1 (2025): 296.

1. Theological implications

The identification of semantic resonances in the names of Qur'anic figures with Hebrew etymological roots indicates that the Qur'an does not merely quote from the traditions of earlier scriptures, as some Orientalists claim, but presents them in a form that is more meaningful, contextually precise, and theologically coherent. This serves as a strong argument that the Prophet could not have independently composed the text of the Qur'an. Not only did he lack any special historical or socio-cultural proximity to the Hebrew linguistic tradition, but the Prophet also lacked literacy in Arabic, the language of his own people.

The narrative parallel between the Qur'an and the Old Testament asserts that the Qur'an did not merely copy Jewish tradition but engaged in corrective intertextualities (*taṣḥīḥ* in the Islamic academic tradition), correcting the speech of the Israelites to remove ambiguity of historical facts in the Old Testament. Thus, the miracles of the Qur'an are not merely rhetorical but also contain the depth of the history of Revelation and semantic accuracy across civilizations.

2. Linguistic implications

This study shows that understanding the Qur'an in depth in some parts is not enough to be armed with Arabic alone; it also requires comparative linguistic competence, especially within the Semitic language family (Hebrew-Arabic). In the case of the aptronym phenomenon described above, it shows that the resonance between the names of Qur'anic figures and the etymological roots of the Hebrew language is not an arbitrary finding. Likewise, the similarity of the utterances of *sami'nā wa 'aṣaynā* with those of *wā-šā-mā-nū wā-'ā-sī-nū* proves the proximity of the phonological aspects of the two languages, as well as showing how the Qur'an represents these utterances in a very similar way and contains theological criticism in it.

The palindromic phenomena in the Qur'an, as in the phrase *kullun fī falak*, add a new dimension to the study of linguistic miracles, showing a representation of cosmic reality in the form of orbits of celestial bodies that are circular, constantly rotating, repeating, and returning to their original point. Perhaps this dimension will give birth to a more interesting

and in—depth discussion in the aspect of linguistic iconism (linguistic iconism)—a principle in linguistics that states that there is a similarity or analogy between the form (sound, gesture, or term) and the meaning of a grammar.⁴⁰

3. Academic implications

This finding of implied miracles actually reinforces the argument that a multidisciplinary approach plays a significant role in the study of the Qur'an. By combining the study of the Qur'anic text with historical linguistics, Semitic etymology, Biblical Studies, Islamic theology, and even philosophy of language, it is possible to identify the magic of this kind of Qur'anic narrative. This finding was, at the same time, a scientific answer to Orientalist critics such as Noldeke, who argued that the Qur'an was nothing more than a theological book that imitated Jewish or Christian traditions and was later claimed by the Prophet Muhammad to be holy scripture.

It may be that after reading this research, someone will say that he is also able to create texts that meet the specifications described above (apronymy, cross-lingual speech parity, and palindromic phenomena). For example, there is a poet who writes poems with a lot of aspects of palindromes (أَسَلُ جَنَابَ غَاثِمٍ *** مُشَاغِبٍ إِنْ جَلَسَا) or by searching for some meaning of the name, someone can easily find a reference to a kind of anagram. But they are wrong because they only see the Qur'an from one point of view. In fact, the Qur'an contains many other miracles. Opponents of the Qur'an often argue that the benchmark for imitation has shifted, when what they imitate is only one of the aspects of miracles.

The Qur'an is a complex miracle because it contains layers of miracles of different kinds and types. In it, various aspects of miracles are elegantly arranged, ranging from legal miracles and predictions to rhetorical, metaphysical, and other topics. All of this is present in a single text and presented simultaneously. This text is not only accurate but also scientifically valid and consistent, with no contradictions.

⁴⁰ Read Winter Bodo et al., "Which Words are Most Iconic?," *Interaction Studies* 8, no. 3 (2025): 433–54, <https://doi.org/10.1075/is.18.3.07win>; or read Timo Roettger, "The Emergence and Stabilisation of Iconicity in Human Speech," *Det Humanistiske Fakultet (UiO)*, 2024, <https://www.hf.uio.no/iln/english/>.

Conclusion

This study has shown that the miracle of the Qur'an is not only in the area of rhetorical beauty or sentence structure, but also in the depth of semantic and etymological awareness across languages beyond the limits of human ability. Through the analysis of aptronyms for Qur'anic figures such as Zakariyā, Ishāq, Ya'qūb, Yaḥyā, and Ibrāhīm, it appears that each name serves not only as a personal identifier but also as a marker of meaning that harmonizes with the narrative context of the narrative. This study also helps to prove that the Qur'an cannot be constructed by humans, because it keeps a pattern of relationships between form, sound, and meaning that is very precise, and there are almost no gaps.

Like the aptronym analysis, the analysis of the narrative parallels between the Qur'an and the Old Testament in the context of the speech of the Israelites shows that the Qur'an presents a corrective intertextuality analysis that the people of the book would not have been allowed to include in the Qur'an had the compilation of the Qur'an been the result of their help. On a more universal level, the structure of the phrase *kullun fī falak* displays a miraculous form that can be immediately identified by those who are aware of cosmic reality, because its linguistic shape is palindromic (circular), being a direct reflection of the meaning of the orbits of celestial bodies that continue to rotate around their center of gravity without end.

Thus, the miracles of the Qur'an in this study are presented in two complementary dimensions: first, the historical-etymological dimension (the phenomenon of aptronymy and the utterances of the Israelites), which indicates the connection of the Qur'an to the roots of earlier Semitic languages. Second, the universal-aesthetic dimension (phrase *kullun fī falak*), which shows the beauty and precision of sentence structure that can be lived by anyone. All of these findings confirm that the Qur'an is a transcendent text because it contains a living, multidimensional, linguistic structure full of implied miracles that can be read, researched, and continue to inspire across ages and disciplines.[]

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