

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
DEPARTMENT OF ISLAMIC SCIENCES**

**MASTER THESIS**

**THE CONCEPT OF AL-RAḤMAH IN THE QUR'ĀNIC  
NARRATIVES WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON SŪRAH  
MARYAM**

**ANA YUNIATI SULEM**

**THESIS SUPERVISOR  
ASST. PROF. İHSAN KAHVECİ**

**ISTANBUL, 2022**

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NARRATIVES WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON SŪRAH  
MARYAM**

by  
**ANA YUNIATI SULEM**

**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in  
Basic Islamic Sciences**

**THESIS SUPERVISOR  
ASST. PROF. İHSAN KAHVECİ**

**ISTANBUL, 2022**

## APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Basic Islamic Sciences (Tafsīr).

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Seal/Signature

## ACADEMIC HONESTY ATTESTATION PAGE

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.



Name Surname: Ana Sulem

Signature:

## ÖZ

### KUR'AN ANLATILARINDA RAHMET KAVRAMI: MERYEM SÛRESİ MERKEZLİ BİR İNCELEME

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'*Rahmet*' kavramı *Meryem Sûresi*'nde hangi şekillerde tezahür etmektedir? Mezkûr kelime yalnızca *merhamet* anlamına mı gelir? Elinizdeki tez, bu sûrede yer alan ilk üç kıssada (Kur'ân, 19:2-50) '*rahmet*' kelimesinin içerdiği anlamların farklı yönlerini tahlil etmeye ve böylece yukarıdaki sorulara cevap vermeye çalışmaktadır. Bu kıssalara odaklanmak, *sûrenin* tamamında sarih ya da zımnen birçok kez tekrarlanarak açıkça resmedilen veya hissedilen işaretlerin incelenmesini gerektirir. Sûrede Allah'ın '*er-Rahmân*' sıfatı sarahaten on altı kez, '*rahmet*' kelimesi ise dört defa geçmektedir. Bu sebeple sûrede '*rahmet*' kelimesinden türemiş toplamda yirmi kelimenin varlığından söz edilebilir. Bununla birlikte sûre, zımnen, '*rahmet*' kelimesinin anlamlarıyla bağlantılı başka kelime ve ifadeleri de barındırmaktadır. Nitekim '*hanân*' (kalp yumuşaklığı, şefkat ve merhamet), '*es-selâm*' (esenlik), '*vehebe*' (bahşetme) ve '*berran bi vâlideyhi/vâlideti*' (ebeveynine itaat eden, iyi davranan) kelimeleri bu kabildendir. Son olarak, bu ilk üç anlatı ile, Allah'ın, seçmiş olduğu kullara (*ibâd*) rahmetinin insan aklının gerçekleşmesini imkânsız gördüğü zaman ve durumlarda peygamber evlatlar bahşetmesi örneğinde olduğu gibi tahayyül sınırlarını aşacak yollarla ve gizli bir surette bildirilmektedir. Bu çalışma, Meryem Sûresi ile alakalı olarak yapılan benzer araştırmalardan, meseleyi daha kapsamlı bir yaklaşımla ele alması hasebiyle ayrılmaktadır. Yanı sıra bu çalışmanın, Kur'ân'ın diğer sûrelerindeki ayetlerle karşılaştırmalı bir analizi; nitel bir içerik analizi ile bir tema

analizini içerdđi düşünölmektedir. Aynı zamanda bu çalıřma bizi, mezkûr kıssalarda geçen ‘*rahmet*’i, rahimleri vasıta kılarak insanları yaratması hasebiyle Allah’ın ‘*er-Rahmân*’ imtiyaz hakkına sahip olması, buna bađlı olarak ebeveyn-çocuk ilişkilerinde tezahür eden ‘*rahmet*’in tek yaratıcısının Allah olduđu sonucuna götürür ki bu durum Allah’ın bizatihi çocuk sahibi olabileceđi iddiasını ortadan kaldırıcı niteliktedir. Bütün bunlar, bir yandan rahmet kelimesinin basitçe *merhamet* manasına geldiđi fikrini çürütürken, diđer yandan -her ne kadar çok yönlü de olsa- bu kıssalarda geçen ‘*rahmet*’ kavramının içerdđi anlamların kapsamlı bir şekilde anlaşılmasında rol oynayan unsur ve usullerin açık ve ayrıntılı bir şekilde gösterilmesine katkıda bulunacaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** er-Rahmân, Meryem sûresi, rahmet, salih evlat.

## ABSTRACT

### THE CONCEPT OF AL-RAḤMAH IN THE QUR'ĀNIC NARRATIVES WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON SŪRAH MARYAM

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In what ways does the concept of *al-raḥmah* manifest in *sūrah* Maryam? Does the word only and merely connote mercy? This thesis project attempts to decipher the many facets of meanings of *al-raḥmah* in the first three narratives (Qur'ān, 19:2-50) found in the *sūrah*, thus attempting to answer these questions. However, endeavors to focus on these narratives depend upon the many repeated explicit and implicit signs the whole *sūrah* emits. Explicitly, the *sūrah* mentions the attribute of God '*al-Raḥmān*' sixteen times within it while the word '*raḥmah*' four times totaling twenty in its basic forms and derivatives. Implicitly, the *sūrah* also carries other words and expressions which connect to the meanings of *al-raḥmah*, such as '*ḥanān*' (gentle and loving), '*salām*' (peace), '*wahaba*' (to present a gift), and '*barran bi wālidayhi/wālidātī*' (utmost dutiful towards parents). Lastly, it is in these very first three stories that the *raḥmah* of the *Rabb*, Allāh, to His selected *ibād* (servants) is implicitly revealed in the most unimaginable ways, i.e., as gifts of prophets as progenies at times and situations which the human mind generally deems impossible. This work stands apart from other research discussing similar topics in *sūrah* Maryam because of its more comprehensive approach that includes a comparative analysis with other verses in other *sūrahs* in the Qur'ān, a qualitative content analysis, and theme analysis. This study will also conclude that these narratives project this particular *raḥmah* as the prerogative right of God as *al-Raḥmān*. Furthermore, this attribute reflects Him as the single creator of humankind through the wombs: the single

creator of the *raḥmah* of parent-children relationships, refuting the claim that He himself can have a son. All of this contributes to the production of detailed and transparent displays of components and modalities which play roles in shaping the comprehensive conception, albeit multifaceted, of the meanings of *al-raḥmah* found in these stories while debunking the notion that the word only and merely means mercy.

**Keywords:** al-raḥmah, al-Raḥmān, righteous children, sūrah Maryam.



## DEDICATION

I present this humble work for my parents and for *al-Sayyidah* Maryam *'alayhā al-salām*.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*Bismillāh, wal-ḥamdulillāh wa al- ṣalātu wa al-salāmu 'alā Rasūl li Allāh wa 'alā ālihi  
wa aṣḥābi wa man wālāhu.*

This thesis is long-time overdue, a dream which stemmed from an affection that flourished over the years while learning about sūrah Maryam and Āli 'Imrān. As I learn to love Rasūl Allāh Muḥammad (may peace and blessings of Allāh always be with him) and his companions (may Allāh be pleased with them all), a lifetime process lies ahead. Many extraordinary men and women around me share their wisdom and hearts on how to love them exactly. Only a few, however, remember their predecessors upon whom love is also rightfully due; for God says about al-muttaqīn, *alladhina yu'minūna bimā unzila ilaika wa mā unzila min qablika, wa bi al-ākhirati hum yūqinun...*<sup>1</sup>

We must believe in the messages the previous rusul carried, learning to love them during the process. As I listened to sūrah Āli 'Imrān and Maryam, over more than ten years, there has always been this feeling of gently being taken care of, which I could not find in other sūrahs of the Qur'ān. Something about the family of 'Imrān attracts the soul – something strongly related to divine *al-raḥmah*. I am thankful to al-Rahmān for opening my being to this real taste: that indeed I, as a Muslim, should learn to love and believe in 'Īsā, Jesus, as one of His messengers, and his mother Maryam, the Virgin Mary, as one of Allah's most devoted servants and beloveds, as I should with the rest of His messengers.

Here I am, writing this acknowledgment in one of the holiest cities in the world, where their footsteps must have trodden, within the creases of these hills, in Bait al-Laḥm. How so appropriate that it is from this very land that these gestures and words of appreciation reach those who have made this journey not only possible but beautiful in the least to say. May my innumerable praise and gratitude arrive at God, Allāh, until infinity and beyond. I am nothing without Him. My humble gratitude I present to my Rasūl, to whom I owe

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<sup>1</sup> Qur'ān 2:4.

my life and heart, without whom I would have been astray. My indebtedness and gratefulness to Shaikh Mokhtar Maghraoui, whom Allāh has generously chosen as my beacon of light; Sayyidī, thank you for all the teachings and all of your love and prayers.

My eternal indebtedness to my mother, Mama, whose every morning and afternoon prayers indeed have kept me alive and well thus far. To my late father, Papa, may Allāh have mercy and be pleased with you for the sacrifices, prayers, and unconditional love. For Gwenda, Firman, and the rest of the family, I sincerely thank you for your love and support. And for my husband, Hendry, whose patience, perseverance, and love kept me going, thank you for making me laugh the many times I felt like crying.

My sincere appreciation to my advisor Asst. Prof. Ihsan Kahveci; for teaching me not only the knowledge of exegeses but also that life is beyond scholarship, to Prof. Dr. Bilal Aybakan; for having faith in me, to Prof. Dr. Omar Hamdan; for the loveliest tafsīr classes and guidance, to Ustādh Ammar Alswah; for directing me to Dr. Samārā'ī's al-Ta'bīr al-Qur'ānī at the very beginning of the formation of this thesis, and to all of my teachers at Ibn Haldun University, at Şuḥbah Fellowship, and outside; for all the support, guidance, and prayers. May Allāh grant you all the best in this life and the hereafter.

Lastly, my deepest gratitude to my dear friends: Reyhan Olgun; for everything, Saadat Eskandarifar; for your hugs, Adam Abu Bakr; for the technical stuff, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Nāṭūr; for your sincerity, and others whom I cannot say one by one. Lastly, to all of my brothers and sisters at al-Madīna Şuḥbah Fellowship, thank you for the prayers and support. May Allah be pleased with you all. *Rabbanā laka al-Ḥamd, ḥamdan kathīran ṭayyiban mubārakan fīhi, mil'a al-samāwāti wa al-arḍi wa mā baynahumā wa mil'a mā shi'ta min shai'in ba'd.*

Humbly and sincerely,

Ana Sulem,

Bait al-Laḥm, al-Quds, August 16, 2022.

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## LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

This manuscript uses *Arabic Romanization* shown below:

<u>Arabic</u>	<u>Latin</u>
أ	a'
ب	b
ت	t
ث	th
ج	j
ح	ḥ
خ	kh
د	d
ذ	dh
ز	z
ر	r
س	s
ش	sh
ص	ṣ
ض	ḍ
ط	ṭ
ظ	ẓ
ع	'a
غ	gh
ف	f
ق	q
ك	k
ل	l
م	m

<u>Arabic</u>	<u>Latin</u>
ن	n
هـ	h
و	w
ي	y

**Important Notes:**

- a. Albeit in English, this thesis retains most of its Arabic terminologies transliterations, as direct translations to English sometimes need to do justice in carrying complete meanings. It provides English translations in parentheses (or vice versa) after the words, usually in the beginning paragraphs of their usages.
- b. The term '*rahmah*' is usually unchanged throughout this manuscript, never directly nor indirectly translated into 'mercy' because one of the points of this study is to investigate whether or not the word 'mercy' can sufficiently represent its meaning.

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background

The idea of the topic of this thesis came about from two primary contemplations:

- a. The word *al-Raḥmān* renders the *sūrah* unique to other *sūrahs* in the Qur'ān. Being repeated 16 times throughout, *sūrah* Maryam becomes the *sūrah* in which God most frequently mentions the term *al-Raḥmān*. See Table. 1.1. below:

**Table 1.1. Number of Occurrences of the Word *al-Raḥmān* in the Qur'ān**

<i>Sūrah</i> Number	<i>Sūrah</i> Names	Number of Count of the word <i>al-Raḥmān</i>	Percentage of Occurrence in the <i>Qur`ān</i>
1	Al-Fātihah	1	2%
2	Al-Baqarah	1	2%
13	Al-Ra'd	1	2%
17	al-Isrā'	1	2%
26	Al-Shu'arā	1	2%
27	Al-Naml	1	2%
41	Fuṣṣilat	1	2%
50	Qāf	1	2%
55	Al-Raḥmān	1	2%
59	Al-Hashr	1	2%
78	Al-Naba'	2	4%
20	Tāha	4	7%
21	al-Anbiyā'	4	7%
36	Yāsīn	4	7%
67	Al-Mulk	4	7%
25	Al-Furqān	5	9%
43	Al-Zukhruf	7	13%
19	Maryam	16	29%

Furthermore, the word *rahmah* repeats four times throughout the *sūrah*, further strengthening this nuance of *al-rahmah*.

As Dr. Faḍīl Šāliḥ al-Sāmārāī mentions in his book *Al-Ta'bīr Al-Qur'ānī*, each *sūrah* of the *Qur'ān* has its own *jau*, or atmosphere, which can be felt, based on the resistibility of certain words or phrases repeated within it.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, the ambiance of *sūrah Maryam* is replete with the concept of *rahmah*, emphasized by the above repetitions of words; in fact, he demonstrated that the nuance of *rahmah* fills the whole *sūrah* starting at its second verse, *dhikru rahmati rabbika `abdahu Zakariyyā* (*This is the mention of the rahmah of your Lord to His slave Zakariyyā*), and lasted until the third last verse of the *sūrah* where it mentions the attribute of God, *al-Rahmān*, once again. This time it represents the being who showers specific characteristics with *wudda*, affection, intrinsic to the concept of *rahmah*.<sup>3</sup> *Inna alladhīna āmanū wa `amilū al-šāliḥāti sayaj'alu lahumu al-Rahmānu wuddā* (*Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds - the Most Merciful will appoint for them affection.*).<sup>4</sup>

The discussion around this concept of *rahmah* certainly forms one of the themes of the *sūrah*. A few thematic exegeses of the *Qur'ān* have mentioned the overwhelming nuance of *rahmah* in *sūrah Maryam*, but the writer has not come across one which explores and focuses on this particular theme, that of *al-rahmah*, comprehensively and coherently. *Naḥw Tafsīr Mawḍū'ī li Suwar al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* cited the number of times the term *al-Rahmān* appears as well as the four occurrences of the word *rahmah* and highlighted that the blessings, *al-an`ām*, of God fill the *sūrah*.<sup>5</sup> It indicates that the favors and grace of God replete *sūrah Maryam* and the fact that they are springs that flows out from *al-rahmah* itself. So is the discussions carried forward in al-Biqā'ī's (d. 885/1480) tafsīr *Naẓm al-Durar fī Tanāsub al-Āyāti wa al-Suwar*,

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<sup>2</sup> Faḍīl Šāliḥ al-Sāmārāī, *Al-Ta'bīr al-Qur'ānī*, (Beirut: Dar Ibn Kathīr, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Al-Sāmārāī, *Al-Ta'bīr al-Qur'ānī*, 294-296.

<sup>4</sup> Qur'ān 19:96.

<sup>5</sup> Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Naḥw Tafsīr Mawḍū'ī li Suwar al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, (Dār al-Shurūq, 2000), 241-242, accessed November 21, 2021, <https://archive.org/details/00518-pdf/page/n557/mode/2up>.

another major theme-based *tafsīr*. In the introduction to *sūrah* Maryam, al-Biqā'ī touches upon the intent of the *sūrah*, which is to show the abundance *rahmah* of God through His grace and blessings to His creations. Over there, al-Biqā'ī focuses exclusively on the discussion of the different *karāmāt* (miracles), which comes at the beginning of the *sūrah*, such as that of Prophet Zakariyyā` and Lady Maryam and her son prophet `Īsā. He further elaborates on the true nature of these *karāmāt*, from the level of their eccentricities and their relationship to the naming of the *sūrah* as Maryam and in proving the unique being, oneness, and attributes of God.<sup>6</sup> In both of these sources, the rest of the explanations of the verses are not viewed from the angle of *al-rahmah* only, but more from the viewpoint of different significant concepts such as the various miraculous incidents portrayed within, the *qudrah* and ability of God, which never depends on any means, and the *tanzīh*, the unblemished nature, the divine nature of God. He can never have a son, contradictory to the claim of the Christians.

A more contemporary celebrated work in the thematic genre of exegeses is that of Ibn `Āshūr (d. 1393/1973), *Tafsīr al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*. In his interpretation of *sūrah* Maryam, Ibn `Āshūr presents fifteen motives for the *sūrah*, the last of which strikes a chord with the focus of this research. The last of the mentioned motives highlights the connection between the sixteen repetitions of the attribute of God *al-Rahmān* and the four occurrences of the word *rahmah* with the concept of *al-rahmah* which paints the *sūrah*. It says, "*fa anba'a bi anna min maqāsidihā taḥqīqu waṣfi Allāhi ta`ālā bi sifatihā al-Rahmān*" (...thus it informs that part of its aims (that of the *sūrah*) is the establishment of the characteristics of *Allāh* by His attribute of *al-Rahmān*). This statement indicates that there will be an overwhelming impression of the *rahmah* of God throughout the *sūrah* as a manifestation of His essence of being the God of

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<sup>6</sup> Ibrāhīm bin `Umar al-Biqā'ī al-Shāfi'ī, *Nazm al-Durar fī Tanāsub al-Āyāti wa al-Suwar* [Arrangements of Pearls of Harmony between Verses and Chapters], Vol.12 (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmi, 1978), 155, <https://archive.org/details/FP3994/ndrr12/mode/2up>. Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn `Āshūr, *Tafsīr al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr* [Interpretation of verification and enlightenment], vol. 16 (Tūnis: al-Dar al-Tūnisiyyah li al-Nashr, 1984), 60. Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Sharqāwī, *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī li Sūrah Maryam* [Thematic Interpretation of Chapter 'Maryam'] ([no place], Jāmi'ah al-Shārqah, 2007), 5.

*rahmah, al-Rahmān*.<sup>7</sup> Thus, albeit comprehensive, his subsequent explanations of the verses of *sūrah* Maryam are based on the mentioned fifteen motives and not focusing on the last motive of projecting *al-rahmah* only.

One literature which in actuality expands the topic of *al-rahmah* in *sūrah* Maryam significantly is a contemporary work entitled *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍūʿī li surah Maryam* by Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Sharqāwī in 2007. Not only that this resource explicitly mentions the *miḥwār*, or axis, of *sūrah* Maryam as *al-rahmah* and *al-'ubūdiyyah*, but it links almost all major narratives found in the *sūrah* to this axis. Most discussions found in it rarely escape from the concept of *al-rahmah*. It also mentions that the reasons for the repetition of the word *al-Rahmān* in this *sūrah* are to instill and overflow the heart of a believer with *al-rahmah*, increasing his hopes and actualizing the benefits of *al-rahmah* within him. Consequently, this will result in his love, closeness, and aspiration: not to mention his certainty throughout his journey with this *sūrah*.<sup>8</sup>

- b. The question of whether it is sufficient to understand the concept of *rahmah* in *sūrah* Maryam simply as mercy. More often than not, English translates the Arabic term *al-rahmah* as mercy. However, as elaborated below, the two terms do not precisely suggest the same meanings or senses.

### 1.1.1. Mercy in English

Understanding the concept of *al-rahmah* in the Qur'ān is something far from trivial. A primary consideration of this is that the word *rahmah* itself and its derivatives are repeated substantially in the Qur'ān - 339 times precisely<sup>9</sup> - and may carry multiple connotations

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<sup>7</sup> Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn `Āshūr, *Tafsīr al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr* [Interpretation of verification and enlightenment], vol. 16 (Tūnis: al-Dar al-Tūnisiyyah li al-Nashr, 1984), 60.

<sup>8</sup> Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Sharqāwī, *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍūʿī li Sūrah Maryam* [Thematic Interpretation of Chapter 'Maryam'] ([no place], Jāmi`ah al-Shārqah, 2007), 5.

<sup>9</sup> Quraish Shihāb, *Ensiklopedi Qur'an, Kajian Kosakata (Malay)* [Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān, A Study in Vocabulary], etjaal.net, Arabic Almanac v6.1. Mawrid Reader v3.1, accessed November 8, 2021, <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#ens=590>.

aside from the meanings of mercy. Moreover, the word *al-raḥmah* in the Qur'ān also derives into two words realized as the two main attributes of God: *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm*. These two names of God come in the Qur'ān most frequently after the ism *al-jalālah* (*Allāh*). They arrive as *ism fā'il* with *al-mubālaghah*, exaggerations, and are repeated at least 114 times in the basmalah<sup>10</sup> found in the Qur'ān with an additional fifty-seven times as a stand-alone attribute of *al-Raḥmān* and 116 times as *al-Raḥīm*. More than this, it is one attribute of God, whose actualizations envelop everything. God himself says in the Qur'ān, *wa raḥmati wasi'at kulla shai'in*, my *raḥmah* encompasses all things.<sup>11</sup> Amongst the translations used to express *al-raḥmah* in English are mercy, compassion, and graciousness,<sup>12</sup> however, more often than not, translations works of the Qur'ān such as those found in Abdul Haleem's, Pickthall's, Yusuf Ali's, and Saheeh International's, amongst many others, opt the term mercy for *al-raḥmah*.

Through a comprehensive look into the meanings of the word mercy Cambridge Dictionary<sup>13</sup> states the following connotations:

- (1) Mercy means kindness that makes you forgive someone, usually someone over whom you have authority. as the case of the sentence: *She appealed to the judge to have mercy on her husband.*
- (2) Hence, it means being at the mercy of something or somebody who has complete power over you, such as in the expression: *Poor people are increasingly at the mercy of money-lenders.*
- (3) Mercy in situations you are grateful for because it prevented you from something unpleasant, such as in the case of *After months of suffering, his death was a mercy.*
- (4) Mercy means being lucky, such as being in a situation that could be far worse: *What a mercy that no one got hurt in the fire.*

<sup>10</sup> The term '*basmalah*' connotes the expression '*Bi ismi Allāhi al-Raḥmān al-Raḥīm*.'

<sup>11</sup> Qur'ān 7:156

<sup>12</sup> "Quran Dictionary – ا ح ج" Quran.com, Kais Dukes, 2017, [https://corpus.quran.com/qurandictionary.jsp?q=rHm#\(1:1:3\)](https://corpus.quran.com/qurandictionary.jsp?q=rHm#(1:1:3)).

<sup>13</sup> *Cambridge Dictionary Online*, s.v. "Mercy," accessed October 2021, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/mercy>

From the above definitions and examples of the word mercy, it is evident that the term comes prominently in adverse situations. In the first example above, the negative situation is in the dominance of the judge over the husband. The second example conveys the inadequate treatment of the money-lenders over the poor people as the adversity. Finally, the third example expresses the experience of months of hardship as its negative situation, and in the last one, a fire that had broken out.

In contrast, the word *rahmah* in the Qur'ān does not always come as a *savior* to a difficult situation or condition. The quoted verse 156 of sūrah *al-A'rāf* above demonstrated this earlier. Many other examples can be found in the Qur'ān where this word appears in a more general sense, with no explicit or implicit indications of adverse situations, such as the word *rahmah* in the following two verses:

- (1) *Wa mā arsalnāka illā rahmatan li al-'ālamīn*, and we did not send you except as a mercy for the whole universe.<sup>14</sup>
- (2) *Fa wajaḍā' abdan\_min' ibādinā ātaynāhu rahmatan min' indinā wa' allamnāhu min ladunnā 'ilmā*, and they found a servant from among Our servants [i.e., *al-Khiḍr*] to whom We had given mercy from Us and had taught him from Us a [certain] knowledge.<sup>15</sup>

In the book of Hārūn bin Mūsā (d. ~170/787) that listed the many meanings of some major qur'ānic vocabularies, *al-rahmah* in the Qur'ān carries eleven *wujūh* (senses) depending on the context of the verse. These meanings include many positive connotations; the *dīn al-Islām* (religion of Islām), *al-Jannah* (paradise), and *al-maṭar* (rain).<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, a more basic meaning is listed in *Mu'jam al-Ta'rīfāt* as *irādah iṣāl al-khair* (the desire for goodness to reach (someone)).<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Qur'ān 21:107, translation by Saheeh International, see <https://quran.com/21>.

<sup>15</sup> Qur'ān 18:65, translation by Saheeh International, see <https://quran.com/18>.

<sup>16</sup> Hārūn bin Mūsā, *al-Wujūh wa al-Nazāir fi al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* [The Science of Multiple Meanings and Interpretations of Words in the Glorious Qur'ān], ed. Hātim Ṣāliḥ al-Dāmin (Baghdād: Dār al-Ḥurriyyah li al-Ṭabā'ah, 989), 53-54.

<sup>17</sup> 'Alī bin Muḥammad al-Sayyid - al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, s.v. "الراء مع الحاء", *Mu'jam al-Ta'rīfāt* [Dictionary of Definitions], ed. Muḥammad Ṣiddīq al-Mīnshāwī (Cairo: Dār al-Faḍīlah), 95, (<https://archive.org/details/waq111440/mode/2up>).

### 1.1.2. *Al-Raḥmah* as a Concept in the Qur'ān

Al-*raḥmah* within the verses of the Qur'ān is an expression of a concept, so much more than a singular word containing a single-dimensional translation. Its understanding thus depends upon several main factors, above and beyond a direct translation:

- a. Many signs in an *āyah* of the Qur'ān can produce an understanding of a concept. However, when the hint comes as a word, it might not represent its meanings comprehensively and elaboratively. Direct translations from one language to another deliver this phenomenon precisely. For example, if the word *raḥmah* translates into English in the second verse of *sūrah* Maryam, *dhikru raḥmati rabbika 'abduhu Zakariyyā*, ([This is] a mention of the mercy of your Lord to His servant Zechariah)<sup>18</sup> the mind will most likely process connotations of mercy in the English language. In this case, subsequent questions will follow; *why did God shower His mercy upon Zakariyyā? What did Zakariyyā do, or what kind of negative situation surrounded him that caused God to extend His compassion and pity towards him? Does the action of mercy here relate only to the concept of rescue? Or are there more considerations?* The answers lie in exploring the surrounding contexts, such as the subsequent verses within the same *sūrah* or in another relating the same stories.<sup>19</sup>
- b. Hence, by looking at the nuances of the word *raḥmah* in the above example, the audience needs to extract two kinds of derivations to reach deeper meanings: semantically and pragmatically. Roughly, these are aspects of senses "inherent within the words and sentences themselves" and those "aspects of meanings which are derived from the way these words and sentences are used."<sup>20</sup>
- c. Verses have specific times, situations, and reasons for their revelations (*asbāb al-nuzūl*). However, upon reading a *sūrah* continuously, connotations and

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<sup>18</sup> Qur'ān 19:2, translation by Saheeh International (<https://quran.com/19>).

<sup>19</sup> For a short explanation of the meanings of context here and the importance of defining the meanings of a concept in a verse, see section 1.4 (Methodology) in this study.

<sup>20</sup> Paul R. Kroeger, *Analyzing Meaning, an Introduction to Semantics and Pragmatics* (Language Science Press, Berlin: 2018), 4, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1164112>.

relationships between preceding and subsequent verses become more evident. These *āyāt* become more intertwined in producing coherent divine intentions.

- d. A sūrah in the Qur'ān sometimes repeats particular words, phrases, or sentences that are not repeated as much in others or not found at all, conveying a strong feeling that each sūrah portrays specific themes and nuances.<sup>21</sup>
- e. Words can carry multiple meanings depending upon *siyāq* (contexts). For example, the term '*ain*' can mean both an eye and a spring of water.<sup>22</sup> Thus, *rahmah* in some verses means mercy, some love, and some respite, amongst others.
- f. There are many possible connotations within the same meanings. For example, the word mercy carries several *types* of kindness and pity, depending on the organization of the verses and the specific contexts at the time of revelation.
- g. Words in the Qur'ān may have two different sides of meanings; *majāzī* (metaphoric), *haqiqī* (realistic), '*ām*' (general), or *khāṣ* (specific)<sup>23</sup>.

Thus the word *mercy* as a translation to every word of *rahmah* in the Qur'ān is not precisely accurate nor suitable and may even mislead a reader. Just as Toshihiko Izutsu warns us in his book *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān* about the danger of understanding concepts based on translations.<sup>24</sup>

*Translated words and sentences are partial equivalents at the very most. They may serve as rough-and-ready guides to our fumbling first steps, but in many cases, they are quite inadequate and even misleading.*

and

*...even when we are actually reading a text in the original we tend almost unconsciously to read into it our own concepts fostered by our mother tongue,*

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<sup>21</sup> Al-Sāmārā'ī, *Al-Ta'bīr al-Qur'ānī*, 281 & 296.

<sup>22</sup> In Qur'ān 2:60, the word '*ain*' is used to express the meaning of a water spring since the context of the verse is about the twelve springs which burst upon prophet Mūsā striking his staff. In Qur'ān 5:45, on the other hand, the same word means the organ eye of a human being because the context of the verse is about the law of *qiṣāṣ*, where a person repays a crime by accepting a similar strike, an eye for an eye.

<sup>23</sup> Jalāl al-Dīn Al-Suyūfī, *Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* [Mastery in the Sciences of the Qur'ān], ed. Muṣṭafā Shaikh Muṣṭafā. Damascus: Resalah Publishers, 2008, 452, 494,

<https://archive.org/details/waq105939/mode/2up>.

<sup>24</sup> Toshiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal: 2002.

*and thus to transmute many, if not all, of its key terms into equivalent terms obtainable in our native language. But if we do this, we are, in reality, doing nothing more than understanding the original text in a translation; we are, in other words, manipulating translated concepts without being aware of it.*

## **1.2. Aims of Thesis**

The thesis relies on one key question: *In what ways do the first three narratives in sūrah Maryam manifest the concept of raḥmah?* This question subsequently branches off into other more in-depth questions:

- a. What is the relationship between the *Rabb* and *'Abd* in the *sūrah* with the bestowment of *al-raḥmah* conceptually?
- b. In which situations does divine *raḥmah* descend?
- c. In the selected verses, do those who receive *al-raḥmah* own particular characteristics? What are they?
- d. Through what ways do the characters in the chosen verses display *al-raḥmah*?

Thus based on the above questions, the study will present an analysis of the exhibitions of the concept of *raḥmah* in the first few narratives of *sūrah* Maryam, namely in the story of prophet Zakariyyā and his son prophet Yaḥyā, in the story of Lady Maryam and her son prophet `Īsā, and in the story of prophet Ibrahīm during his conversation with his father. The study will include a systematic analysis of the verses that will conclude with tables representing the categories of incidents of *raḥmah*. The author hopes that towards the end of this manuscript, the readers will be able to form a conclusion in their minds at least of the following few points:

- That there is a more in-depth understanding of the concept of *raḥmah* in *sūrah* Maryam; it is considerably more intricate and complicated than the simple translation of the word into *mercy* in English.

- The various manifestations of *al-rahmah* across the narratives have several components intrinsically; that of the bestower, that of the receiver, and that of how *rahmah* is in-specie expressed (or the type of *rahmah* therein).
- That there are specific reasons for the descent of *al-rahmah* throughout the narratives.

The discussions about the concept of *al-rahmah* in this research stand apart from other similar literature available by highlighting the importance of holistically examining the elucidation of the notion of *al-rahmah* within the context of the selected verses, comparing with the same narratives in other *sūrah*s, and finally presenting these connections in a conceptual and flowing way to the readers.

Furthermore, it lets the audience ponder and realize the implementations of the meanings and nuances of *al-rahmah* in terms of the unique and supreme omnipotence of God, His exclusive authority to create blood relationships. Nevertheless, His entity is entirely exalted, above and beyond being related to family connections. The reader will hopefully be able to reflect upon divine aspects within parent and child relationship dynamics and the various ways the concept of *al-rahmah* is expressed all over these dynamics.

### **1.3. Scope and Framework Analysis**

As mentioned earlier, the study will only include an analysis of the concepts of *rahmah* found in the stories of the prophets contained in a group of selected verses, namely verses two until fifty of *sūrah* Maryam, inclusive. The research and analysis will focus on how *al-rahmah* manifests over the narratives through the relevant characters within these verses while considering both the subject (doer/bestower) and object of *rahmah* alongside the reasons for *rahmah* to descend upon these characters.

Moreover, the occurrence of the word *rahmah* itself four times throughout these stories will be a foundation for building its analysis. Finally, the author aspires to undertake the mission to solve the puzzle of the meanings of the word *al-Rahmān* in this particular *sūrah*

and its connection to the concept of *raḥmah* in a future undertaking. Thus this topic, albeit monumentally both relevant and pertinent, will not be included in this current endeavor as it will demand significantly extra time and research effort beyond this study.

The overpowering nuance of *al-raḥmah* in the surah becomes the main reason the writer has chosen it as the topic of discussion, despite many others evident in the *sūrah*, such as the praising of the *al-anbiyā'* and *al-mursalīn* (the prophets and messengers)<sup>25</sup> and the manifestations of their *karāmāt* and *mu'jizāt* (miracles)<sup>26</sup> or the *tanzīh* of Allāh from having a child<sup>27</sup>. Al-Biqā'i's<sup>28</sup> also mentions this nuance in his opening statement for the tafsīr of this *sūrah*: "*maqṣūdun bihā bayānu ittiṣāfihi subḥānāhu bi shumūli al-raḥmati bi ifāḍati al-ni'ami' alā jamī'i khalqihī bimā yadullu 'alā ittiṣāfihi ta'ālā bi jamī'i ṣifāti al-kamāl.*"<sup>29</sup> This, however, cannot restrict the formation of the understanding of the word *raḥmah* from being entirely independent of the earlier-mentioned subjects. On the contrary, it can only comprehensively emerge through its connections to those distinct ideas.

Of course, since the scope of this thesis is limited to the verses mentioned before, it is pertinent to note that the readers will not gain as deep of an inner reflection about the concept of *al-raḥmah* as if someone were to ponder the whole *sūrah* which, according to Sayyid Quṭb in his famous thematic tafsīr *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, is divided into three main themes.<sup>30</sup> From these three themes, my research will only fixate on the first two.

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<sup>25</sup> Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn `Ashūr, *Aghrād al-Suwar fī Tafsīr al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr* [The Objectives of the Chapters in the Exegesis "Tafsīr al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr"], 43, Quranicthought.com, The Prince Ghazi Trust of Qur'ānic Thought, 2023, accessed January 11, 2023, <https://www.quranicthought.com/books.السور-في-تفسير-التحرير-والتنوير-أغراض>.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>27</sup> 'Abd Allāh Maḥmūd Shahānah, *Ahdāf Kulli Suwari wa Maqāsidihā* [The Goals of Each Chapter and Their Intentions] ([No place]: Al-Hay'ah al-Maṣriyyah al-'Āmmah li al-Kitāb, 1976), ISBN: 5 156 201 977, accessed January 12, 2023, <https://www.kotobati.com/book/reading/34feeabf-6d60-4aa8-899e-48423819f78f>.

<sup>28</sup> Ibrāhīm bin `Umar Al-Biqā'ī al-Shāfi'ī, *Naẓm al-Durar fī Tanāsub al-Āyāti wa al-Suwar* [Arrangements of Pearls of Harmony between Verses and Chapters], vol. 12 (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmi, 1978), 156, accessed October 21, 2021, <https://archive.org/details/FP3994/ndrr12/mode/2up>.

<sup>29</sup> "Its intent (the intent of the *sūrah*) is to describe the attribution of God by the comprehensiveness of the *al-raḥmah* of God through the overflowingness of blessings and gifts upon all of His creations denoting the characterization of God the al-Mighty with all of the attributes of perfection."

<sup>30</sup> The three main themes include God's unbridled will, a string of prophets, and two interlinked lives.

Regardless, the reader will sense a deeper meaning of a special divine *rahmah* which is distinct to this particular part of the Qur'ān only. Throughout the discussion, this thesis will attempt to exhibit how exactly the *rahmah* of God envelopes prophet Zakariyyā, his son prophet Yaḥyā, Lady Maryam and her son prophet 'Īsā, prophet Ibrāhīm and his son prophet Ishāq and his grandson prophet Ya'qūb (may peace and blessings of God envelopes them all).

#### 1.4. Methodology

Contextual analysis plays a significant role in determining which methods are suitable to explore the meanings of a word used in an utterance. Similarly, it can also dissect the meanings of a word or a concept, such as *al-rahmah*, in the Qur'ān. Context means that word meanings consist of more than their basic definitions – meanings intrinsic to the word itself. Many external factors, including those linguistic-based and non-linguistic ones, also play a significant role in shaping meanings. Some coined these divisions based on how close these factors are in proximity with the word at issue, categorizing them as *micro* and *macro* contexts; micro being other textual evidence that relates to the word in question within the identical text and macro being other external factors such as the situation and mood of the speaker and the listeners at the time of the utterance<sup>31</sup>.

In terms of qur'ānic vocabulary, micro contexts translate into other words, sentences, verses, and sūrahs that directly or indirectly influence the way a particular word projects meanings in a verse of the Qur'ān.<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, the macro contexts are those non-linguistic elements that indirectly affect its projected denotations, such as the reasons for revelation in the first place (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) and the cultural and social situations and conditions of both the addressee and the speaker at that time.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, the contexts of the verses in a *sūrah* can differ from the context of the *sūrah* itself, yet they still inter-

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<sup>31</sup> Būzīd Raḥmūn, "al-Dalā' ilu al-Siyāqiyah li al-Qiṣāsi al-Qu'ānī: Qiṣṣatu al-Nabī Mūsā 'alayhi al-salām Unmūdhajan" (Master's thesis, Jāmi'atu Farḥāt Abbās of Saṭīf, 2010/2011), 6-7, <http://hdl.handle.net/setif2/87>.

<sup>32</sup> Būzīd Raḥmūn, "al-Dalā' ilu al-Siyāqiyah," 7.

<sup>33</sup> Raḥmūn, "al-Dalā' ilu al-Siyāqiyah", 10,12, and 13.

correlate to form a unified theme.<sup>34</sup> Thus considering these factors, this study chooses the most appropriate methodology to determine the meanings of *al-rahmah* in those specified parts of *sūrah* Maryam.

Necessarily, it undertakes an investigation leaning on library research, qualitative content analysis, and theme analysis. Library research covers various literature in a library database, readings upon finding, and making key notes pertinent to the relevant topics.<sup>35</sup> Based on these notes, the writer decides to apply a qualitative content analysis where it analyses data from primary and secondary sources. This part of the analysis examines patterns and frequencies of these relevant topics before concluding with the results. Theme analysis, on the other hand, is applied to produce similar themes when dealing with a large quantity of data.<sup>36</sup>

Content analysis plays a role throughout this study as the various verses are like sets of text data that can group into codes, summarized into categories, and analyzed for specific repetitions of certain concepts or relevant variables. At the same time, patterns and nuances are noticed, one more than the other. Moreover, the Science of Concordances between Verses (*ilm munāsabah bayna al-āyāt wa al-suwar*) also plays a role in extracting meanings as necessary.

The theme analysis part of the research helps to pinpoint the key themes from sets of selected verses by looking at emerging similarities. Furthermore, relevant concepts sprouting out from the content analysis part determine possible formations of specific topics.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 14-17.

<sup>35</sup> C.R. Kothari, *Research Methodology, Methods and Techniques*, (New Delhi: New Age International (P) Ltd. Publisher, 2004), 7.

<sup>36</sup> Kerryn Warren, "Qualitative Data Analysis Methods 101: The "Big 6" Methods + Examples," gradcoach.com, GradCoach International, May 2020, <https://gradcoach.com/qualitative-data-analysis-methods/>.

The first part of the analysis contains discussions based on primary sources; the Qur'ān. It then explores the interpretations of selected verses concerning *rahmah* by the words of the giants of exegetes from the first three to five centuries after *hijrah* and those in the much later times. These will include Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) and Ismā'īl ibn Kathīr (d. 701/1300), whose *tafāsīr* (exegeses) lean more towards *riwāyah* than *dirāyah* covering narration based *tafāsīr*, and Abu al-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144), Fakhruddin al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), Abū Ḥayyān Athīr ad-Dīn al-Gharnāṭī (d. 745/1344), whose *tafāsīr* lean more towards *dirāyah* (*tafāsīr bi-ra'ī*) covering linguistic aspects, logic such as *kalām*, and others. Further down the line, several explanations in terms of themes and goals of the sūrahs of the Qur'ān will be explored through the eyes of *thematic*-based *tafāsīr* (exegeses), as the goal of this study is to look for an elaboration of the concept or theme of *rahmah* in a surah, after all. Thus, the excursion will venture towards a few of these types of exegeses, be it classical such as al-Biqā'ī's,<sup>37</sup> or contemporary ones, such as Ibn' Āshūr's,<sup>38</sup> Sayyid al-Qutb's,<sup>39</sup> Muḥammad al-Ghazālī's,<sup>40</sup> and Sāliḥ' Abd al-Fattāh al-Kḥālīd's. Moreover, there are places throughout the investigation where word analysis is required, lexically or otherwise, and in some instances, classical and modern dictionaries are consulted. These will include *Mu'jam Maqāyis al-Lughah* of Ibn Fāris (d. 395/1004), *Kitāb Mufradāt fi Gharīb al-Qur'ān* of al-Rāghib al-Asfahānī (d. 502/1108), and *Lisan al-'Arab*, amongst others. Secondary sources used are namely other books and journal articles whose subject matters are related to the concept of *al-rahmah*. Furthermore, the analysis will also compare the narratives from *sūrah* Maryam and similar stories found in other sūrahs. This method will prove that although the main ideas in the two are equal, there are subtle differences between the two compared sets of verses which uncover distinct nuances or themes for each story.

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<sup>37</sup> Nazm al-Durar fi al-Tanāsub bayna al-Āy wa al-Ṣuwar li Burhān al-Dīn Abi al-Hasan Ibrāhīmi 'Amri al-Biqā'ī (d. 885/1480).

<sup>38</sup> Tafsīr al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr li Muhammad al-Tahir ibn Ashur (d. 1393/1973).

<sup>39</sup> Fī Zīlāl al-Qur'ān li Sayyid Quṭb Ibrāhīm Ḥusāin al-Shādhilī (d 1386/1966).

<sup>40</sup> Nahw Tafsīrin Mawḍū'īn li Suwari al-Qur'āni al-Karīm li Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d 1417/1996).

Lastly, a content analysis diagram in table formats will be presented in the conclusion section, summarizing the results succinctly and clearly, enabling the reader to understand the howness and nature of the flows of *rahmah* that spread out throughout each narrative.

## 1.5. Literature Review

This section of the thesis consists of reviews of current literature immersed in the fields parallel to the main topics of this study. It provides the reader with their descriptions, main points, gaps in research, and their contributions to the subject in mind. In addition, it will examine several books by authors in the field related to the topics of *al-rahmah* and several published articles and theses related to the subject of this study.

Within this premise, the subject of *al-rahmah* dissects into two main intrinsic constituents: first, the discussion on the matter of the usage of the concept of *al-rahmah* in the Qur'ān and second, the application of *al-rahmah* specifically found in *sūrah* Maryam. This review will then deal with the previously mentioned works by considering these viewpoints.

### 1.5.1. Resources Covering Divine *Rahmah* in the Qur'ān

Emran Izat Yusef Bkhit, in his Masters Thesis entitled *Al-Rahmah Al-Ilāhīyah: al-Dirāsah al-Qur'āniyyah* (God's Mercy: A Qur'ānic Study), dwells into the meanings of *al-rahmah al-ilāhiyyah*, divine *rahmah*, holistically. He divided his 199-page study into four main sections, namely: *The definition of Divine Rahmah and its Signs in the Qur'ān*, *The Reasons for Divine Rahmah as presented throughout the Qur'ān*, *The Characteristics of Divine Rahmah and its signs in the Qur'ān'* and *Deterrence of Divine Rahmah*.<sup>41</sup>

The comprehensive study is replete with examples from the Qur'ān and prophetic narrations related to the meanings and usages of the word *rahmah* from the viewpoint of *rahmah* originating from God and not as an expression coming from His creations. He

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<sup>41</sup> Emran Izat Yusef Bkhit, "Al-Rahmah al-Ilāhiyyah: al-Dirāsah al-Qur'āniyyah" (Master's thesis, An Najah National University, 2009), ح-٤.

also quotes and refers to major classical exegeses, such as al-Ṭabarī, and extracts many discussions based on Ibn `Āshūr's *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*. In his second chapter, in the subsection *The Meanings of Divine Raḥmah and Its Signs in the Qur'ān*, the writer listed different possible interpretations of the word *raḥmah* based on the science of *al-Wujūh wa al-Nazāir*.<sup>42</sup> In another chapter, he also establishes the meanings of the characteristics of God *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm*, for example, by looking into His other attributes that come in pairs with them in the verses of the Qur'ān. His study provides an insight into the multifaceted characteristics of *al-raḥmah* from God expressed in the Qur'ān, depending on the contexts surrounding the verse. A birds-eye view of the study based on its four major components enlightens the reader with the nature of the word *al-raḥmah* that the definition of *al-raḥmah* depends on intrinsic and extrinsic values inclusively. The sense of a word depends on who the executors and recipients are, the reasons for its descent, and which contexts the *raḥmah* comes into.

The study divides the type of divine *raḥmah* expressed by the attributes of God and how much He manifests his blessings and graces in human lives. Additionally, the study also views *divine raḥmah* in His *sharī'ah*, His legislative divine law, being served for the goodness of humankind, and how *Islām* plays a role in expressing His *raḥmah* to the world. In this sense, the study is holistic and comprehensive, from which this current study has benefitted. Albeit this, in Bkhit's thesis, the elaboration of the concept of *al-raḥmah* concerning specific themes of particular *sūrahs* in the Qur'ān, of which the interest of this writer lies in that of *sūrah Maryam*, is not touched upon. Additionally, since the thesis title is *al-Raḥmah al-Ilāhiyyah*, it is not expected that his manuscript contains a depiction of *raḥmah* as a noble character that humans can certainly adopt. Thus the writer of this current thesis has benefitted from this literature in other facets of *raḥmah*.

As a human character, `Alī Muṣṭafā discussed *al-Raḥmah* in a conference proceeding entitled *Raḥmah fī al-Islām, Wāqi'iyyah al-Mafhūm wa Daf' al-Shubuhāt (Raḥmah in Islām, Application of Concept and Removing of Doubts)*. The goal was to answer the

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<sup>42</sup> Emran Izat Yusef Bakhit, "Al-Raḥmah al-Ilāhiyyah: al-Dirāsah al-Qur'āniyyah" (Master's thesis, An Najah National University, 2009), 21.

following question: How is it possible to understand the word al-rahmah with a comprehension that suits the Islamic principles while at the same time also satisfying the natural inclinations of the mind (to understand things)?<sup>43</sup>

The research divides into five major sections: *The Concept of Khulq of al-Rahmah (the Character of Rahmah)*, *The Actualization of the Concept of al-Rahmah in the Islamic Ethics System*, *The Stature of the Character of al-Rahmah in the Qur'ān and Sunnah*, and *The Suspicions of the Deniers of the Concept of Rahmah in Islam and its Answer*.<sup>44</sup> Thus the study focuses on the concept or meanings of *al-rahmah* as a character in the individual personalities of a Muslim, in societal dealings, and as the essence of *al-Islām* manifested in the Qur'ān, Sunnah, and way of life as a Muslim.

The paper emphasizes the importance of applied al-rahmah, both from the perspective of divine rahmah and the perspective of human rahmah, to define the word al-rahmah. The concept of *al-rahmah* should not only be lexically defined and related to the inner dimension of the heart, expressed as a soft and gentle feeling towards others, motivating one to contribute goodness to others or to prevent harm. *Al-rahmah* should also manifest in real life in whatever way necessary to achieve the goal of imparting goodness and preventing harm, which is sometimes achieved by impacting the *marḥūm* (recipient of *rahmah*) discomfort.<sup>45</sup> This is a very scarce and pertinent addition to the concept of *rahmāh*, but an important one, the least to say. This way, the notion that *al-rahmah* contains only gentleness and sympathy is debunked.

In summary, the paper dives into both the reality and versatility of *al-rahmah* through three primary considerations: its comprehensiveness in the lives of human beings, its dynamics with and integration into other characteristics to satisfy the various individual and societal rights, and the inclusiveness of balance in the implementation of *al-rāḥmah*

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<sup>43</sup> `Alī Muṣṭafā, "Al-Rahmah fi al-Islām: Wāqī'īyah al-Mafhūm wa Daf' al-Shubuhāt" (*Rahmah* in Islām, Application of Concept and Removing of Doubts), (paper presented at the International Conference of Mercy in Islām, College of Education, King Saud University, Riyadh, 7 - 9 February 2016), 267.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Muṣṭafā, "al-Rahmah fi al-Islām," 275.

to uphold justice.<sup>46</sup> The paper also presents an in-depth analysis of the notion that Islām is the religion of peace and *rahmah* (in this case, mercy), contradictory to those who claim otherwise by quoting the verses of *Al-Qiṣāṣ* and the verse of *killing* in different context and applications, amongst many others.<sup>47</sup>

Hence this work has helped the researcher of this current study in a few aspects, such as in what ways *al-rahmah* should be defined and the nature of *al-rahmah* in its implementation amongst humankind in general. It also means that the discussion runs parallel to the discourse of the concept of *al-rahmah* in the first three narratives in *sūrah* Maryam because *rahmah* is portrayed there both from a human and a divine standpoint. In his work, Muṣṭafā mentions a collateral information material to the polysemous nature of the word *al-rahmah* in the Qur'ān, that the word means *al-rizq* (provision), *al-naṣr* (help), *al-maḥabbah* (love and affection), *al-maghfirah* (forgiveness), *al-līn* (softness) and *al-tasāmuḥ* (tolerance). However, perhaps because the focus of the research is not specific to this sub-category of *al-rahmah*, so to speak, an elaboration on what grounds these types of goodness are categorized as part of *al-rahmah* is missing.<sup>48</sup>

Alif Hidayatullah, in his journal article Terminology of the word *Rahmah* in the Qur'ān (A Study of Quraish Shihāb's Interpretation in Tafsīr al-Miṣbāḥ),<sup>49</sup> defines the concept of *al-rahmah* by looking at a few relationships: its close connections with the words *ʿaziz* (sympathizing with others), *ra'ūf* (soft and gentle), and *ḥarīṣ* (being extremely concerned towards others), the beneficiaries of the *rahmah* from God, and the thematic interpretation of *rahmah* in verse fifty-eight of *sūrah* al-Kahf (extracted from *Tafsīr al-Miṣbāḥ* of Quraish Shihāb). It provides a general idea of the role of interpreting the meanings in the Qur'ān thematically by giving an example through *Tafsīr al-Miṣbāḥ*.<sup>50</sup> In conclusion, it states that the *rahmah* of God is specific since its beneficiaries are mentioned in the Qur'ān

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 277.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 284 – 294.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 289.

<sup>49</sup> Translated to English from the original title: "Terminologi Rahmah Dalam Al Qur'an (Studi Interpretasi Quraish Shihab Dalam Tafsir Al-Misbah)."

<sup>50</sup> Alif Hidayatullah, "Terminologi Rahmah Dalam Al Qur'an (Studi Interpretasi Quraish Shihab Dalam Tafsir Al-Misbah)," [Terminology of the word *Rahmah* in the Qur'ān (A Study of Quraish Shihāb's Interpretation in Tafsīr al-Miṣbāḥ)], *QOF* 3 (2), (2019): [https://doi: 10.30762/qof. v 3i2.1614](https://doi.org/10.30762/qof.v3i2.1614), 144-145.

by their titles, such as the *muḥsinūn*, *mūqinūn*, *mu'minūn*, and *'ālamīn*. This short study thus fills in a peculiar gap in the range of the spectrum of defining *al-rahmah* in the Qur'ān.

Yusrati Windah et al., in their journal article *The Meaning of the Word' Al-Rahmah* and its derivatives in the al-Qur'ān (A Semantic-based Study),<sup>51</sup> dissect the word *rahmah* in the Qur'ān from a semantical, or more specifically, morphological point of view: that the term *rahmah* in the Qur'ān derives into 12 forms, including verbs, adjectives, and nouns/verbal nouns, and hence, 12 meanings based on those specific forms.<sup>52</sup> This short article provides an even narrower window to understand the word *rahmah* and lacks the depth of sense for each shape of the word. More than this, although Windah et al. present multiple connotations on some of the forms, the table listing these meanings presents them as if they are form-dependant and have no relationships with contexts, despite the existence of other reasons such as context, which can influence the multiplex nature of word-meaning.

As for Şaban Ali Düzgün's article *The Nature Of Mercy/Rahma And Its Manifestations In The Qur'an*, it supplies three modalities to the manifestation of divine *rahmah* firstly through the acts of God in providing existence - that *rahmah* is the overflowing of the will of God in creating, secondly through the realization of the *akhlāq* or inner characteristics of humankind by making them His vicegerents on Earth, and lastly through sending them the guidance to do so through His messenger, Muḥammad, viz. the Qur'ān.<sup>53</sup>

This article stands out from the others within the scope of this review because he essentially dwells on the concept of divine *rahmah* through the eyes of *al-mutakallim*.<sup>54</sup> Düzgün provides eleven nature of the *rahmah* of God based on Qur'ānic verses, four of

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<sup>51</sup> Translated to English from its original title: Makna Kata Al-Rahmah dan Derivasinya dalam Al-Qur'an (Suatu Tinjauan Semantik).

<sup>52</sup> Yusrati Windah, Munir, Kamaluddin Abunawas. "Makna Kata Al-Rahmah dan Derivasinya dalam Al-Qur'an (Suatu Tinjauan Semantik)" [The Meaning of the Word' Al-Rahmah' and its Derivatives in the al-Qur'ān' (A Semantic-based Study) [51]] Diwan, vol. 5 no. 2, (December 2019), <https://doi.org/10.24252/diwan.v5i2.10220>, 189.

<sup>53</sup> Şaban Ali Düzgün, "The Nature Of Mercy/Rahma And Its Manifestations In The Qur'an." Kader 15, no 3 (2017): 566-567, <https://doi.org/10.18317/kaderdergi.360263>.

<sup>54</sup> Scholars who specialize in *al-kalām*, also loosely translated as theologians.

which relate directly to the subject of this study: *rahmah* as the guiding principle in creation - based on the first four verses of *sūrah al-Raḥmān*,<sup>55</sup> the concept of *al-rahmah* expressed as *ḥubb* (love) and their main difference, the ascription of *al-rahmah* to His own self - all of His creations stem from this consideration, and that the *rahmah* of God causes possibility in the finiteness of the torment in the hellfire.<sup>56</sup>

In his elaboration of the first point, he mentions that *al-Raḥmān* implies that God is *dhu al-rahmah*, the owner of *rahmah*. It also indicates that the very nature of God itself is *rahmah*, the reason why His mercy precedes His anger. It is also because He is *al-Raḥmān* that He creates things. Thus His creation and the whole divine system that He equips His creations with are all expressions of His attribute of *al-Raḥmān*: "...all the creation is crafted under the principle of *rahmah* and all relationships are tarred with the same brush."<sup>57</sup>

With this origination and manufacturing - and their adjunct systems, His extended aid also comes for His creations to follow and benefit. These sequences and processes are all part of His *rahmah*, known more as Him being *al-Laṭīf*.<sup>58</sup>

In the last component of *al-rahmah* - that which relates to the finitude of torment of the hellfire- Düzgün emphasizes a crucial reason why logically speaking, the torment in the hellfire can never be infinite. Quoting an excerpt from one of the books of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyyah, he stresses that punishment is a means and not an end - when it reaches its purpose, its continuance also dictates ending.<sup>59</sup>

This literature stands out amongst the rest due to its more in-depth discussion of the manifestation of divine mercy from the perspective of theologians, thus providing this

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<sup>55</sup> Qur'ān: 55:1-4.

<sup>56</sup> Düzgün, "The Nature of Mercy/Rahma...", 571-573.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 571.

<sup>58</sup> Düzgün, "The Nature of Mercy/Rahma...", 573.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 574.

humble writer with an insight into the connections between the oft-repeated name of God *al-Rahmān* in *sūrah* Maryam with its first three narratives.

Another journal article worth visiting, albeit from an Orientalist perspective, is that of Rotraud Wielandt. In her journal article, *Manifestations of Divine Mercy and its Scope in the Qur'ān*, Wielandt focuses on the way divine *rahmah* reveals in three situations: in the benevolent gesture of God in creating whatever He deems to and providing whatever things necessary to maintain it, His delivery of prophets to impart guidance to humankind for their safety in this lower world and the next, and lastly in His forgiveness for those who sin.<sup>60</sup> Although similar to Düzgün's points, towards the end, she emphasizes the necessity of divine justice in the hereafter, so much so that the finiteness of the torment of hellfire becomes questionable.

Within this scope, Wielandt extended the discussion focusing on the conditional nature of divine *rahmah*, in summary, arguing against the notion that the *rahmah* of God is bound to everything, thus without any limit nor condition. She supports other opinions on the matter of the all-encompassing mercy of God, that the verse of the Qur'ān which carries the sentence *wa rahmatī wasi'at kulla shai'*<sup>61</sup> does not license absolute forgiveness to everyone, including those unbelieving and associating partners to God, because the verse cannot be taken out of context. In this case, the context was that God could even forgive the people from Banī Isrā'īl who participated in the worshipping of the golden calf, associating partners with God. This divine kindness and forgiveness is nothing but because of the *rahmah* of God that encompasses everything.<sup>62</sup>

She continues the discourse by proving that the verses which mention the divine *rahmah*, whether within the milieu of the lower world (*al-dunya*) or the next world (*al-ākhirah*),

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<sup>60</sup> Rotraud Wielandt, "Manifestations of Divine Mercy and its Scope in the Qur'an," *Concilium* (00105236), Issue 4, (2017): 78.

<sup>61</sup> Qur'ān 7:156.

<sup>62</sup> Wielandt, "Manifestation of Divine Mercy," 82-83.

also allude to its conditional nature,<sup>63</sup> that divine *raḥmah* comes with certain reasons and pre-requisites and comes to a specific group of people.

Hence this article focuses on the fact that *al-raḥmah* cannot be seen as unconditional - thus becoming the overpowering factor to the judgment of God because this would defeat the purpose of the sending of the His revelation to humanity, which is one of the sources of divine law to be followed.<sup>64</sup>

More comprehensively than the two theological-based articles above, another source written by Sajjad H. Rizvi also explains deeply the concept of divine *raḥmah*, this time from the window of esoteric-based exegeses, in addition to theology (*al-kalām*). His writing centers around Ibn `Arabi's definition of *raḥmah* as dissected in his book *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam*. Rizvi based his discussions on three different commentaries of Ibn `Arabī (d. 638/1240) that of `Abd al-Rahman Jāmī (d. 898/1492), `Abd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī (d. 736/1336), and Khwāja Ya'qūb Charkhī (d. 851/1447), concentrating more on Jāmī's.<sup>65</sup> [64] He aims to introduce the meanings of the attributes of God *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm* from the viewpoint of a *sūfī* exegete who was also a *mutakallim* (theologian).

In his analysis, while citing and quoting what was said by the above three mentioned personalities, he concludes that divine *al-raḥmah* diverges into four parts, in light of Ibn `Arabi's *Fuṣūṣ*: first, the concept of *raḥmah* equals to the bestowal of existence to all things; second that without its role the unfolding of the universe with all of its components would not exist; and lastly that *raḥmah* can indeed be looked at from four different windows: as a divine essence, which overflows over divine attributes, that further can be divided into general or specific.<sup>66</sup> These characteristics absolutely externalize the two attributes of God: *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm*.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 81

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 84

<sup>65</sup> Sajjad H. Rizvi, "The Existential Breath of al-Raḥmān and the Munificent Grace of al-Raḥīm: The Tafsīr Sūrat al-Fātiha of Jāmī and the School of Ibn Arabī," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 8, no.1 (2006): 58-87 on 60 & 69, <https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2006.8.1.58>.

<sup>66</sup> Rizvi, "The Existential Breath of al-Rahman ...", 70.

The article further states that *Al-Raḥmān* reflects the essence of God and his acts of emitting *raḥmah* through creating existence, thus God as the source of *raḥmah*, while *al-Raḥīm* connotes the obligation to requite *raḥmah* to distinct creations through the divine attributes, thus God as the *Giver of Raḥmah*.<sup>67</sup>

The above sources impart a broader yet more holistic view of divine *raḥmah* from a different perspective. The first few concentrate more on extracting its essences from a lexical and semantical point of view, while the last three capture them from the stances of both *al-mutakallim* and *ṣūfī* exegetes. They provide a fundamental and essential understanding of the concept of *raḥmah*: its sources and behaviors in general, and the differences and relationships between this particular source of *raḥmah* and its recipient. However, they still leave this study to seek the relationships between these key concepts of *raḥmah* and the term *al-raḥim* (the womb) and *al-raḥima* (kinship), a crucial and pertinent sub-topic for this study. Thus this reflects the gap in research for this study in the above materials, albeit a possible (but insufficient) inference of this relationship within those resources.

### 1.5.2. Resources Covering Divine *al-Raḥmah* in *Sūrah Maryam*

This part of the section covers academic literature directly related to the primary analysis of this thesis, the divine *raḥmah* expressed in *sūrah* Maryam - more specifically- in its narratives of prophet Zakariyyā and his son prophet Yaḥyā, Lady Maryam and her son prophet al-Masīḥ `Isā ibn Maryam, and in the story of prophet Ibrāhīm during and after his conversation with his father concerning worshipping idols.

First, this review will discuss a book covering the concept of *al-simah al-ta'biriyyah* connected to *sūrah* Maryam. This topic dilates on the idea that each *sūrah* of the Qur'ān has its own identity expressed by context and phrases/words, which repeats ubiquitously.<sup>68</sup> Subsequently, this review will cover the repetition of the term *raḥmah*

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>68</sup> Al-Sāmarrā'ī, *Al-Ta'bīr al-Qur'ānī*, 294-296.

in *sūrah* Maryam by Ra'ad Tālib Karīm<sup>69</sup> before diving into the work of Shawkat M. Toorawa.

The concept of *al-simah al-ta'biriyyah*, in Fādil Şāliḥ al-Sāmarrā'ī's *al-Ta'bīr al-Qur'ānī*, implies that particular atmospheres and themes for each *sūrah* in the Qur'ān surface through the repetition of certain words in it. This repetition is one of the signs of a context that exists in a specific *sūrah*. These words are crucial to composing the *simah*, the distinguishing brand - if you will- of the apposite *sūrah* that differentiates it from other *sūrahs*.<sup>70</sup> These repetitions stem from different reasons. In the case of *sūrah* Maryam, al-Sāmarrā'ī opted for a *simah* which emanates from the opening of the *sūrah*, in verse two where God says, "*Dhikru raḥmati rabbika `abdahū Zakarīyyā...*" Here he considers that the term *raḥmah* is the key to the spreading of its nature across the *sūrah*, first by the four-time repetition of the exact word itself and secondly by the sixteen-time recurrence of the attribute of God *al-Raḥmān* in different verses with different contexts. Thus the usage of the word *raḥmah* or *al-Raḥmān* (derived from the same root *al-rā' -al-ḥā' -al-mīm*) in the *sūrah* is not imperatively tied to the different circumstances or contexts the verses fall upon. The fact that God chooses to apply the word *al-Raḥmān* and not His other beautiful names, not even Allāḥ, signifies His intention to emphasize *raḥmah*. Similar verses that fall under different contexts in other *sūrahs* also project the same phenomenon, juxtaposing-ly. He gave an example of verse 18 in *sūrah* Maryam when Lady Maryam was seeking protection from the angel by using the name *al-Raḥmān* and not Allāḥ<sup>71</sup> (*innī a`ūdhubi al-Raḥmāna minka in kunta taqīyyā*),<sup>72</sup> contrary to the seeking for protection of prophet Mūsā in *sūrah* al-Baqarah where the *ism jalālah*, *Allāḥ*, is applied instead (*a`ūdhu bi Allāḥ an akūna min al-jāhilīna*).<sup>73</sup> Al-Sāmarrā'ī points out that this difference is because, in *sūrah* Maryam, the utterance of *al-Raḥmān* comes 16 times, while in *sūrah* al-Baqarah only one time. The term Allāḥ, on the other hand, repeats 182

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<sup>69</sup> Ra'ad Tālib Karīm, "Balāghah Takrār Alfāz (*al-Raḥmah*) fī Sūrah Maryam (Repeat the words of Eloquence (Mercy) in Surat Maryam)," *Al-Fatih Journal* 4, no. 36 (2008): 135-144, <https://www.iasj.net/iasj/download/c7c61560cf168914>.

<sup>70</sup> Al-Sāmarrā'ī, *Al-Ta'bīr al-Qur'ānī*, 281.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 294.

<sup>72</sup> Qur'ān 19:18.

<sup>73</sup> Qur'ān 2:67.

times in al-Baqarah, while in Maryam, only eight. Hence the word Allāh in Prophet Mūsā's case and *al-Raḥmān* in the instance of Lady Maryam.

This work is meritorious in proving the atmosphere of a *sūrah* to a certain extent, leading to the understanding of the intent of God in the pertinent *sūrah*. The atmosphere of *sūrah* Maryam then intends to convey the feeling of mercy and love and to elaborate the manifestation of God as *al-Raḥmān*. Albeit this incredible thought of al-Sāmārā`ī, his analysis lacks in answering the next probing question: *what is the reason behind the repetition of the words raḥmah or al-Raḥmān in this sūrah - in other words - why only in this sūrah?* It is inconceivable to predict the nature of this *raḥmah* grounding only upon repetition of a distinct phrase or terms in the *sūrah*. It naturally mandates a more in-depth analysis based on internal and external contexts.

The second resource on par with the topic of this study is that entitled *Balāghah Takrār Alfāz (al-Raḥmah) fī sūrah Maryam* (the Eloquence of the Repetition of the term (al-Raḥmah) in *sūrah* Maryam) by Ra'ad Ṭālib Karīm. He categorizes the discussion of *al-raḥmah* into three main sub-sections. He starts with a discussion on the *balāghah* (rhetoric and eloquence) of the art of repetition, the concept of *al-raḥmah*, and an introduction to *sūrah* Maryam before delving into the topic of *balāghah* of the term *al-raḥmah* being re-iterate multiple times in *sūrah* Maryam. He concludes the article with the importance of the achieved results from his analysis.<sup>74</sup>

This study dives into the concept of *raḥmah* more from the viewpoint of the attribute *al-Raḥmān*. It covers the various expressions of *al-raḥmah* purposefully as an act of God as *al-Raḥmān*. It examines the verses which contain this attribute of God and expands its relationship with the concept of *raḥmah* by looking at how the word al-Raḥman fits within the context of these verses. Classical tafāsīr such as *al-Nuqat wa al-`Uyūn*, *Tafsīr al-Rāzī*, *Tafsīr Abū Su`ūd*, *Tafsīr Sa`dī*, and *Tafsīr al-Alūsī* were all included in the analysis. Karīm observes some of the meanings of *al-raḥmah* expressed by the name of God *al-Raḥmān* as follows:

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<sup>74</sup> Karīm, "Balāghah Takrār Alfāz (al-Raḥmah) ", 1.

- (1) Al-rahmah does not mean loosely forgiving without accountability, the Most Merciful, al-Rahmān, can inflict adhāb (punishments) to those who are `āṣī (disobedient) and are sinners (without proper repentance).<sup>75</sup> This meaning is extracted from verses 41 to 45 in the story of Prophet Ibrāhīm and his polytheist father.<sup>76</sup>
- (2) al-Rahmān is the one who sends āyāt (signs) to humanity for them to follow the straight path based on verses 54 - 58 in sūrah Maryam.<sup>77</sup> Here, the concept of al-rahmah is indirectly alluded to mean al-hudā (guidance) to humankind.<sup>78</sup>
- (3) The ṣifah of Allāh being al-Rahmān means that gifting Jannah al-`Adn (paradise of Eden) to al-muttaqīn (the God-conscious) is binding upon Him.<sup>79</sup> This instance alludes to the highest form of al-rahmah.<sup>80</sup>
- (4) God as al-Rahmān grants rahmah to the al-muttaqūn by gathering them on the day of reckoning, and that they will not be alone, contrary to the one who disbelieved.<sup>81</sup>
- (5) His creations are always in need of His rahmah because all of them are slaves to Him and nothing more. Thus al-rahmah naturally attaches to and manifests in Him by His attribute al-Rahmān. In this part of the discussion, Karīm implies that this is one of the proofs that `Īsā ibn Maryam can never be His son as being the son of God connotes a higher status than being a prophet, insinuating that a son can never equate a slave. A son does not require the same mercy, pity - al-rahmah - as a slave does from His master, a feature that none in this grandiose universe of God owns, including prophet `Īsā.<sup>82</sup>

Although this research incorporates a detailed explanation of the concept of *rahmah* by extracting various *tafāsīr*,<sup>83</sup> it lacks a deeper analysis of the relationships between *al-*

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<sup>75</sup> Karīm, "Balāghah Takrār Alfāz (al-Rahmah) ", 6.

<sup>76</sup> Qur'ān 19:41-45.

<sup>77</sup> Qur'ān 19:54-58.

<sup>78</sup> Karīm, "Balāghah Takrār Alfāz (al-Rahmah) ", 7.

<sup>79</sup> Based on Qur'ān 19:61.

<sup>80</sup> Karīm, "Balāghah Takrār Alfāz (al-Rahmah) ", 8.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>83</sup> [82] Ibid, 4-6.

*rahmah* given to prophet Zakariyyā and the rest of the characters mentioned. This correlation is paramount to see the more general theme of *al-rahmah* within the *sūrah* expressed elaborately with specific components attached. These components should include the similarities and differences each of these stories carry from the viewpoint of *al-rahmah*. They differentiate the research from others which generally only conclude that there is a nuance of *rahmah* from the beginning of the *sūrah* until the end.

The last journal article worth mentioning in this review is that of Shawkat M. Toorawa, entitled *Sūrat Maryam (Q.19): Lexicon, Lexical Echoes, English Translation*. Although it does not discuss the layers of *al-rahmah* found in *sūrah* Maryam, it presents the reader with a new perspective to extricate its central themes. The article discusses the importance of looking at the lexicon of the *sūrah*, specifically focusing on three features: rhyming end words, hapaxes (words occurring only in this *sūrah*), and repeating words and roots. It claims a much different approach from other modern authors who have walked through a similar avenue by focusing on the lexical aspects of *sūrah* Maryam, especially its microstructure aspects, instead of its macrostructure, such as its thematic accounts.<sup>84</sup>

Henceforth Toorawa puts forward the idea of a bipartite structure of *sūrah* Maryam - as others suggest - one part identifies as narrative while the other as polemic.<sup>85</sup> What makes his study different than the others - that of Angelika Neuwirth's, Neal Robinson's, and Bilal Gökür's - is that Toorawa concentrates on rhymes and repetition when making the divisions for *sūrah* Maryam, while the rest are still mainly emphasizing in thematic considerations. According to him, Gökür does not connect these repeated rhymes with the thematic division of the *sūrah* even though he includes repetition in his inquiry.<sup>86</sup> Toorawa opined that there must be relationships between repeated words and their rhetorical meanings, such as the re-occurrence of the *nidā'* of *yā abātī* in the narrative account of prophet Ibrāhīm to his father to mean constant beseeching and the sixteen times repetition of the word *al-Rahmān* and four-times repetition of the term *rahmah* as a

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<sup>84</sup> Shawkat M. Toorawa, "Sūrat Maryam (Q.19): Lexicon, Lexical Echoes, English Translation," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 13, no. 1 (2011): 25–78 on 26-30, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41352832>.

<sup>85</sup> Toorawa, "Sūrat Maryam...", 27.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, 31.

portrayal of the pervasiveness of the mercy of God (as stated by Muḥammad al-Ḥasnāwī in his study of rhetorical aesthetics of certain *sūrahs* in the Qur'ān).<sup>87</sup>

Toorawa presents a comprehensive table containing repeated words and hapaxes for future researchers to benefit from to determine the rhetorical structure of the *sūrah* particularly. Toorawa also provides an example of repeated words in similar and different contexts and their impacts in terms of translation. Different contexts demonstrate the different usages of words like *shaqiyyā*, *waliyyā*, and *samiyyā*. Some indicate meanings that are alike, while others indicate entirely different. Some verses run these terms in accord - that one verse contains similar patterns and structures to the other- but may end up using the same word as echoes without any corresponding meanings - while some are both parallel and project the same senses of the word.<sup>88</sup> The term *taqiyya*, for example, repeats in verses 13, 18, and 63, all portray the analogous connotations of true piety in three different contexts, with no parallel.<sup>89</sup> Once the verses are listed one after another, though, those who have true piety expose themselves from the three contexts, viz., the prophets and angels.<sup>90</sup> Thus the writings of Toorawa stress the importance of finding rhetorical structures, such as rhymes and word repetitiveness in *sūrah* Maryam, as a tool to understand the meanings of its verses and to extract available themes in the *sūrah* entirely.

This connection of the article with the topic of *al-raḥmah* in *sūrah* Maryam thus far is not explicit. However, it supports the notion that the repetition of the word *al-Raḥmān* and *raḥmah* in *sūrah* Maryam must eventually lead to a specific theme. Moreover, just like the word *taqiyya*, the different connotations of *al-Raḥmān* in sixteen different contexts presented in this *sūrah* can be withdrawn similarly. As an example, the particular actions of *al-Raḥmān* manifest when one examines the other surrounding vocabulary in the verses, which eventually clusters the characteristics of *al-Raḥmān*. Thus this study does

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 57.

<sup>89</sup> Qur'ān 19:13, 18, 63.

<sup>90</sup> Toorawa, "Sūrat Maryam...", 59.

not explicitly answer the question *How does God as al-Rahmān manifest his rahmah in this sūrah?* The answer only lies implicitly or indirectly.



## CHAPTER II

### ***RAḤMAH: A MULTIFACETED WORD***

#### **2.1. Basic and Relational Meanings of the Word *Raḥmah***

Two primary considerations contribute to the origination of the concept of meanings: first, from its basic word and sentence meanings, and second, from its relationships to its surroundings or other contexts which form its relational meanings. From this narrow sense, the basic meanings categorize into two: word meanings and sentence meanings. Words and sentences are the building blocks of linguistic forms. This connecting linguistic forms<sup>91</sup> and their inherent meanings are the subject matter of semantics. However, the basic meanings only sometimes convey the intention behind the word entirely. Thus, its relational meanings cover this deficiency.

Contrastingly, relational meanings convey the pragmatic inferences triggered by the peculiar ways the speaker uses the word in a particular context.<sup>92</sup> It also considers the construal of external realities that shape the comprehension of the words.<sup>93</sup> These types of meanings are also known as pragmatic meanings. When both the basic and relational meanings are combined to understand the intents of the speaker, the utterance meaning is formed. Thus, as Kroeger summarizes, the utterance meaning "*refers to the semantic content plus any pragmatic meaning created by the specific way in which the sentence gets used.*"<sup>94</sup> This understanding is, therefore, coherently agreeing with the statement of Toshihiko Isutzu that "*the meaning of a word is not exhausted by its basic meaning. It has*

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<sup>91</sup> "Linguistic Form, noun," Merriam-Webster Dictionary, accessed January 12, 2023, Merriam-Webster Dictionary, [https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/linguistic %20 form](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/linguistic%20form). According to this online dictionary, a linguistic form is a meaningful unit of speech (such as a morpheme, word, or sentence).

<sup>92</sup> Kroeger, *Analyzing Meaning*, 4.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 80

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

also a relational meaning and this latter always comes from essential combinations into which it enters a given system."<sup>95</sup>

Although the above linguistic ways of defining meanings are general, it provides a basic understanding which is both relevant and pertinent to our subsequent discussions to make sense of the concept of *al-rahmah* in the Qur'ān. It shows that although the term *rahmah* has its basic meanings that are often translated from Arabic to other languages, such as the word *mercy* or *pity* in English, its usages in particular contexts will carry much deeper and extended meanings in some cases, when applied to a specific verse, or a set of *āyāt* (verses) in a *sūrah* in the Qur'ān. This is where the Science of Concordance of the *āyāt* of the Qur'ān by one towards the other, *ilm munāsabat āyy al-Qur'ān wa suwarihi*, plays a vital role in comprehension in the interpretation of a word in the verses of the Qur'ān.<sup>96</sup>

The next few sub-sections attempt to introduce the reader to the concept of *al-rahmah* in the Qur'ān based on its basic meanings, followed by a brief discussion on its relational meanings.

### 2.1.1. The Basic Meanings of the Word *Rahmah*

Linguistically, the Arabic word *rahmah* contains the root letters *al-rā'*, *al-hā'*, and *al-mīm*. According to Ibn Fāris (d. 395/1004) in *Qāmūs Maqāyish al-Lughah*, the root letters of *rahmah*, *al-rā'*, *al-hā'*, and *al-mīm* in that particular order, principally contain the meaning of *al-riqqah*, *al-'atf*, and *al-ra'f*.<sup>97</sup> These words, in English, deliver the following meanings: to have softness and pity for someone (*raqqa lahu qalbuhi*, he took pity on him),<sup>98</sup> to incline, to be attached, and to be fond of someone (*'atf bihi 'an' alā*),<sup>99</sup> and to

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<sup>95</sup> Toshihiko Isutzu, *God and Man in The Qur'ān*, 150.

<sup>96</sup> Al-Ṣuyūṭī, *Al-Itqān*, 630-641.

<sup>97</sup> Abū al-Husain Aḥmad bin Fāris bin Zakariyyā, *Mu'jam Maqāyīs al-Lughah* [Dictionary of the Criteria of Language], ed. 'Abd al-Salām Hārūn, (Dār al-Fikr, 1979), 2:498. [https://archive.org/details/FP10288/00\\_10288/mode/1up](https://archive.org/details/FP10288/00_10288/mode/1up).

<sup>98</sup> Hans Wehr, s.v. "عطف," in *Hans Wehr: A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, 4th edition, ed. J. Milton Cowan (Urbana: Spoken Language Services, Inc., 1979), 726, accessed October 2021, <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#hw4=739>.

<sup>99</sup> Wehr, s.v. "رق", in *Hans Wehr Dictionary*, 408, <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#hw4=421>.

show mercy and kindness (*al-ra'fah*).<sup>100</sup> *Mufradāt al-Qur'ān* by al-Rāghib al-Asfahānī (d. 502/1108) also mentions the following;<sup>101</sup> *al-raḥmatu riqqatu taqṭaḍī al-iḥsān ila al-marḥūm*, *al-raḥmah* is gentleness and pity which requires perfection towards the object of *al-raḥmah*. *Al-raḥmah* intrinsically carries a desire to do good, to make happiness to reach another, or bears a type of love that makes one desire to diminish the pain of another.<sup>102</sup>

Perhaps in a more practical way, the word *raḥmah* can be represented by the actions of one who acts with *ra'f*, gentleness, and vice versa; the one who is void from *al-raḥmah* would act with the opposite of *al-ra'f*: *al-qaswah wa al-gilzah* (hardness and harshness), often expressing *al-ghaḍb*, anger. Thus, a subtle difference between *al-raḥmah* and *al-ra'f* is that both are considered an act of the heart, but *al-ra'f* is closer to a physical meaning than *al-raḥmah* since only with the action of *al-ra'f* can *al-raḥmah* be actualized.<sup>103</sup>

The way *al-raḥmah* is used between God and His creations and between them towards one another also connotes differences. 'Umdat al-Ḥuffāz by Īmām Aḥmad bin Yūsuf al-Ḥalabī (d. 856/1452) opined that when utilized in the context of God, *al-raḥmah* acts *kināyatan*; symbolizing the act of God being gentle, merciful, loving, generous, and perfect towards his creatures. The word *raḥmah* also signifies every goodness (*khair*) that comes through the provisions (*al-rizq*) that God bestows upon someone alongside other goodness which comes from other than it.

These same root letters also form the word *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm*, where the former covers believers and non-believers altogether, while the latter only covers those believers specifically<sup>104</sup>. Al-Rāghib categorizes *raḥmah* into two; the first being *al-iḥsān* and the

<sup>100</sup> Wehr, s.v. "رأف", in *Hans Wehr Dictionary*, 368, <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#hw4=381>.

<sup>101</sup> Rāghib Al-Isfahānī, s.v. "رب", in *Al-Mufradāt fi al-Gharīb al-Qur'ān*, 253, Arabic Almanac v6.1. Mawrid Reader v3.1, Accessed: January 11, 2023. <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#amr=252>.

<sup>102</sup> Jamīl Ṣalībān, s.v. "الرحمة و الرأفة" in *al-Mu'jam al-Falṣaḥīy* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1982), 1:611, <https://archive.org/details/lis01626/01/page/n5/mode/2up>.

<sup>103</sup> Al-Sayyid 'Abbās Nur al-Dīn et.al, s.v. "الرحمة", in *Mu'jam al-Muṣṭalahāt al-Akhlāqīyyah* [Dictionary of Terminologies in terms of Characters] (Beirut: Markaz bā' li al-Dirāsāt, 2006), 39, [https://archive.org/details/hzrvan\\_20180821\\_2325/page/n3/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/hzrvan_20180821_2325/page/n3/mode/2up).

<sup>104</sup> Aḥmad bin Yūsuf bin 'abd al-Dā' im al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī, 'Umdat al-Ḥuffāzī fi Taḥsīn al-ʿAshraf al-ʿAlfāz, *Mu'jamun Lughawīyyun li Alfāz al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* [Support of Those Who Memorises in Interpreting the Most Noble Words], ed. Muḥammad Bāsīl 'Uyun al-Sūd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlm, 1996), 3:80-81.

second *al-riqqah*. He opted that if the characteristics of *rahmah* are attributed to God, it portrays perfection, *al-ihsān* only, and not *al-riqqah*<sup>105</sup>. One narration translates divine *al-rahmah* into *al-in'ām* (to offer favors, ease, and happiness<sup>106</sup>) and *al-ifḍāl* (*the act of gracing benefits and beneficial surplus to others*).<sup>107</sup> Hence divine projection in *al-rahmah* is the ability of God to give goodness or rewards to His creations, even for those who do not deserve them, and to endow protection, including those who do not deserve to be protected.<sup>108</sup>

The word *rahmah* is also strongly connected to the term *al-rahim* (the womb) since whatever the womb carries is showered with a plethora of *rahmah*, and it is only natural to name family relationships as *al-rahima* or *al-ruḥum* or in its plural form *al-arḥām*.<sup>109</sup>

*Kitāb al-'Ain* mentions a few stanzas on the usage of this which signifies the use of the word *al-rahima* as family relationships and blood (*al-qarābah*)<sup>110</sup> and the fact that it could be severed:<sup>111</sup>

*nujfā wa tuqṭa'u minnā al-rahīma*

(we are treated harshly, and blood relationship is cut from us)

This meaning connects with the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet about the importance of maintaining family ties:<sup>112</sup>

<sup>105</sup> Rāghib Al-Iṣfahānī, s.v. "رحم", in *Al-Mufradāt*, 253, accessed January 12, 202, <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#amr=252>.

<sup>106</sup> Wehr, s.v. "نعم", in *Hans Wehr Dictionary*, 1150 (<https://ejtaal.net/aa/#hw4=1163>).

<sup>107</sup> Wehr, s.v. "فضل", in *Hans Wehr Dictionary*, 841 (<https://ejtaal.net/aa/#hw4=854>).

<sup>108</sup> Ṣalībān, s.v. "الرحمة والرافة" in *al-Mu'jam al-Falṣafiy*, 1:612, <https://archive.org/details/lis01626/01/page/n5/mode/2up>.

<sup>109</sup> Aḥmad bin Yūsuf al-Ḥalabī, s.v. "رحم", in *Umdat al-Ḥuffāzi*, 3:80.

<sup>110</sup> Edward William Lane, s.v. "رحم", in *An Arabic English Lexicon, Book I*, (Beirut: Librairie Du Liban, 1968), 1055, Arabic Almanac v6.1, Mawrid Reader v3.1, <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#l=1098>. Lane Lexicon mentions the explanation of this word as *القربى في الرحم* (kinship or relationship which resulted from the birth of the womb), and it also synonymizes with the word *al-qurba* alone, relationships or relationships from the female side of the family.

<sup>111</sup> Al-Khalīl bin Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī, *Kitāb al-'Āin Murattaban 'alā ḥurūf al-Mu'jam*, (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2002), 2:106-107.

<sup>112</sup> Abū 'Īsā Muḥammad ibn 'Īsā as-Sulamī aḍ-Ḍarīr al-Būghī Al-Tirmidhī, "Jami' at-Tirmidhi: What Has Been Related About Being Merciful With People: Chapters on Righteousness And Maintaining Good Relations With Relatives: Ḥadīth1924", accessed January 12, 2023, <https://sunnah.com/tirmidhi:1924>.

*al-Raḥima sijnatun min al-Raḥmān fa man waṣalahā waṣalahu Allāhu wa man qaṭa`ahā  
qaṭa`āhu Allahu.*

(The womb comes (is named after) after *Al-Raḥmān*, so whoever connects it, Allāh connects him, and whoever severs it, Allah severs him.)

From the above discussions, we can see that lexically the word *raḥmah* basically contains the meanings of softness, gentleness, generosity, mercy, fondness, sympathy, or pity, and most importantly, biological relationships in general, which resulted from birth from the same mother. Based on this, the word *raḥmah* contains a relationship meaning with motherhood and motherly love towards her child. Furthermore, *al-raḥmah* divides further into two conceptually: lexically, one being that of Allāh, and the other, that of the *al-khalq*, the creations.

The proceeding section briefly elaborates on the relational meanings of the word *raḥmah* in the Qur'ān based on a few excerpts from the books of *al-Wujūh wa al-Nazāir*, as an example of the use of the thematic methodology in order to extract meanings from the words in the verses of the Qur'ān.

### **2.1.2. Relational Meanings of the Word *Raḥmah***

The theory of *al-Wujūh wa al-Nazāir* reflects the concept of polysemy in word meanings. It discusses those words which look exactly the same yet carry different secondary meanings when used in dissimilar contexts. These words have the same basic meanings but many different relational meanings or secondary senses. They are different from homonymous words, analogous words which hold completely different primary or basic meanings, each irrelevant to the other.<sup>113</sup>

The following two sentences demonstrate how words can be polysemous:<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Kroeger, *Analyzing*, 89.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, 95.

- a) Several rare ferns grow on the steep banks of the burn where it runs into the lake.
- b) Baked since 1919.

The word *runs* shown in the above sentence (a) represents the extent of the growth of these rare ferns and not the connotation of running with two feet from one point to the next, although both reflect a sense of fast movement. The reader can correctly infer the meaning of the word run in the sentence by knowing that ferns are plants, not animate objects with two feet.

Similarly, the reader can withdraw the correct meaning from the word *baked* in the above sentence (b) by the common knowledge that there can never be food that could last without turning into ashes when baked for a substantially extended period of time. In this case, if the reader were to read this sentence in the year 2021, then it would be impossible to assume that the word baked here transmits a basic meaning since there would not be any food to remain, which defeats the purpose of the sentence. The context, in this case, signaled by the rest of the part of the sentence *since 1919*, provides a clue that this sentence is most likely a slogan that points towards the prolonged period of establishment of a food company, consequently emitting a relational meaning.

The above examples generally demonstrate the phenomena of words carrying multiple meanings. In the sciences of the Qur'ān, the *ulamā* (scholars) of *al-Wujūh wa al-Nazāir* also discusses this topic in detail. Hārūn bin Mūsā (d. 160-180/~790) mentions that the word *al-wujūh* indicates the multiple meanings a particular *qur'ānic* word denotes, namely, its multiple relational meanings. The term *al-nazāir*, on the other hand, are the places where exact words occur within a *wajh* (the singular for *wujūh*).<sup>115</sup> Thus, there are vocabularies in the Qur'ān that are indeed polysemous.

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<sup>115</sup> Hārūn bin Mūsā, *al-Wujūh wa al-Nazā'ir*, 8.

Al-Dāmaghānī,<sup>116</sup> in his work *Iṣlāḥ al-Wujūh wa al-Nazāir*, mentions two rudimentary meanings for the word containing the root letters *rā ' -ḥā ' -mīm*, first expressed in *al-raḥima* and the second being *al-raḥmah*. From the first word, two *wujūh* (denotations) emerge; the first as *al-qārabah*, kinship, and the second as *raḥimu ummi*, or the womb of a mother. The second *nazīrah*, *al-raḥmah*, contains 14 *wujūh* depending on verses and *sūrahs*. Those 14 includes *al-Islām*, *al-Jannah*, *al-maṭār*, *al-nubūwwah*, *al-ni'mah*, *al-qur'ān*, *al-rizq*, *al-naṣr*, *al-faṭḥ*, *al-'āfiyah*, *al-mawaddah*, *al'imān*, *al-tawfīq*, prophet 'Īsā, prophet Muḥammad (SAW).<sup>117</sup>

In the *muqaddamah*, the author relates many of his opinion towards that of Muqātil ibn Sulayman (d. 150/767) from his opus *al-Wujūh wa al-Nazāir*[28].<sup>118</sup> Many of the classical (traditional) *tafāsīr*, such as *tafsīr al-Mawārdī*, *tafsīr al-Qushairī*, and *al-Qurtubī* refer to this work of his.<sup>119</sup>

Another book by al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmīdhī (d. 320/942), *Taḥṣīl Nazāir al-Qur'ān*, also mentions polysemous meanings of core vocabulary in the Qur'ān. The difference is that al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmīdhī also opted that besides the multiple denotations these words impart, there should be an *'āmil mushtarik thābit*, a fundamental fixed meaning, for each term before the heterogeneity that follows. He rejects the concept of synonyms as it would indicate that each word would not have a separate identity from a possible other, which contradicts the notion of *'āmil mushtarik thābit* for each word.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Al-Jāmi' al-Ḥusain bin Muḥammad al-Dāmaghānī, *Qāmūsu al-Qur'ān aw Iṣlāḥ al-Wujūh wa al-Nazāir fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* [Reform in the Different Meanings of Words of the Glorious Qur'ān based on the Science of 'al-Wujūh wa al-Nazāir'] (Beirut: Dāru al-'Ilmi wa al-Malāyīn, 1983), 5-6, accessed January 11, 2023, <https://waqfeya.net/book.php?bid=6562>.

It is mentioned in the introduction of his book his possible lineage from Qādī al-Qaḍāh of Baghdad Abu 'Ālī Muḥammad bin 'Ālī bin Muḥammad al-Damāghānī or Qādī al-Qaḍāh Abi 'Abdullāh al-Dāmaghānī. Neither his date of birth nor death is unknown.

<sup>117</sup> al-Dāmaghānī, *Iṣlāḥ al-Wujūh wa al-Nazāir*, 199.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Al-Ḥakīm Al-Tirmīdhī, *Taḥṣīl Nazāir al-Qur'ān* [A Conclusion on the Different Perspectives in the Meanings of the Words of the Qur'ān], ed. Ḥusnī Naṣr Zaydān (Maydān Aḥmad Māhir: Maṭba'ah al-Sa'ādah, 1969), 13-14.

The majority of the original denotation al-Tirmidhi chooses to opt before branching into the polysemous nature of a word comes from prophetic traditions terminology, or sayings of the companions, or the pious predecessors and other ulama in the past.<sup>121</sup> Henceforth, he opts to define *al-rahmah* incipiently as (an essence) which flows down from the throne of God, before defining its ten connotations; *al-nubuwwah*, *al-Islām*, *al-rizq*, *al-naṣr*, *al-faṭḥ*, *al-mawaddah*, *al-ʿāfiyyah*, *al-maṭar*, *al-Qurʿān*, and *al-Jannah*, all of which have the same characteristic in common: much *khair*, goodness.<sup>122</sup>

For the sake of example, al-Tirmidhi opts the meaning of *al-Jannah* (paradise) for the term *rahmah* placed in verse 107<sup>123</sup> of *sūrah* Āli ʿImrān.<sup>124</sup> This is possible by looking at the verses before and after, as well as its other parts, such as the vivid description of some faces being bright, indicating the high probability that the event takes place in paradise.

As the scholar Ibn Kathīr also mentions in his tafsīr of this verse: the *rahmah* here means *al-Jannah*: "(wa ammā alladhīna ibyadḍat wujūhuhum fa fī raḥmati Allāhi hum fihā khālīdūn) ya ʿnī al-Jannah, mākihūna fihā abadan, lā yabghūna ʿanhā ḥiwalā."<sup>125</sup> This interpretation is in-lined with its preceding verses, where God talks about a day when faces turn white and black, indicating the day of *qiyāmah*, the day of standing where God takes into account who will be saved from the fire (*al-Jahannam*) and enters paradise, and who will not be so fortunate<sup>126</sup> "Yawma tabyadḍu wujūhuhun wa taswaddu wujūhuhun fa ammā alladhīna iswaddat wujūhuhum akafartum baʿda imānikum fadhūqū alʿadhāb bimā kuntum takfurūn." Now compare with this verse:<sup>127</sup> "wa mā kunta tarjū an yulaqqā ilaika

<sup>121</sup> Al-Tirmidhī, *Taḥṣīl Nazāir al-Qurʿān*, 15.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 47-48.

<sup>123</sup> Qurʿān 3:107, where it says, "(wa ammā alladhīna ibyadḍat wujūhuhum fa fī raḥmati Allāhi hum fihā khālīdūn) (as for those whose faces became white, they are in the rahmah of Allāh in which they abide forever...).

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 199-200.

<sup>125</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʿān al-ʿAzīm*, al-tafsir.com, Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2021,

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=7&tSoraNo=3&tAyahNo=107&tDisplay=yes&Page=2&Size=1&LanguageId=1>. In the explanation of Āli ʿImrān verse 107, the sentence "ya ʿnī..." translated as "...Meaning Paradise, where they will stay in forever, never wanting other than it."

<sup>126</sup> Qurʿān 3:106.

<sup>127</sup> Qurʿān 28:86. Translated as: "And you were not expecting that the Book would be conveyed to you, but [it is] a mercy from your Lord. So do not be an assistant to the disbelievers."

*al-kitābu illā raḥmatan min rabbika falā takūnanna zahīran li al-kāfirīn.*" In this case, Ibn Kathīr elaborates that this *raḥmah* is the reason for sending the *Kitāb* to the Prophet. Meaning that with this *raḥmah* - which God sends because of the self of the Prophet - He bestows this great grace and blessing (*ni'mah* of receiving revelation) to the Prophet and to His slaves. This revelation did not come because of the mere hope and desire of the Prophet.<sup>128</sup> Here *raḥmah* cannot mean paradise because the context surrounding the verse is the event of the descent of revelation (*al-kitāb*) to him. Thus the *raḥmah* is highly connected to prophethood. This is perhaps why al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī considers the word *raḥmah* here to mean prophethood.<sup>129</sup>

Therefore contexts play a definite role in determining the meaning of the word *raḥmah* in the above two verses. The concept of *munāsabah al-āyy fi al-Qur'ān* decides on the *wajh* and *naẓīr* of the first verse as a result of specific reasons such as *al-muḍāddah* (inference based on opposite meanings). The interlinking contexts between the verses and that which is before it (*al-tanzīr*) then determine the interpretation for the second verse, making the meaning of both the words and the verses much clearer.<sup>130</sup>

Now that the polysemic nature of *al-raḥmah* and the importance of contexts in its determination have been established based on the preceding examples, the big questions remain: *which ones of the above meanings of raḥmah would the characters in the stories in sūrah Maryam have? Which types of divine raḥmah can be detected in those stories? From what angles should these meanings be extracted? Is it enough to merely describe these meanings with one word only, as in the above examples?* The writer hopes the following analysis sections will enable the audience to discover the answers.

<sup>128</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-`Aẓīm*, altafsir.com, altafsir.com, Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2021,

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=7&tSoraNo=28&tAyahNo=86&tDisplay=yes&Page=2&Size=1&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>129</sup> Al-Tirmidhī, *Taḥṣīl Naẓāir al-Qur'ān*, 47.

<sup>130</sup> Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Itqān*, 632.

## CHAPTER III

### A COMPARISON: AL-RAḤMAH IN THE NARRATIVE ACCOUNTS OF ZAKARĪYYĀ AND YAḤYĀ IN SŪRAH MARYAM, 'ĀLI 'IMRĀN, AND AL-ANBIYĀ

The narratives of Prophet Zakariyyā and Yaḥyā come in three *suwar*<sup>131</sup> (chapters) of the Qur'ān; verses 2-15 of *sūrah* Maryam, verses 37-41 of *surāh* 'Āli 'Imrān, and verse 89 of *al-Anbiyā*'. A question may arise that if their narratives convey the same main story about the individuals, as will be seen, then how can one claim that it is only in *sūrah* Maryam that the meanings of *al-raḥmah* are more vividly expressed and not so much so in the others? One of the pertinent factors to determine the differences between the meanings of *raḥmah* contained in the same narratives in different *suwar* of the Qur'ān is by looking at the core themes each *sūrah* delivers because each of these narratives flows in a way that supports these themes.<sup>132</sup>

#### 3.1. Expressions and Components of *al-Raḥmah* in *Sūrah* Maryam

##### 3.1.1. Divine *al-Raḥmah* in the Event of Zakariyyā's Plead to God

In *sūrah* Maryam, the story of Zakariyyā starts with the mention of the word *dhikr*, *raḥmah*, *rabb*, and *'abd*. As a matter of fact, this introduction happens to be the opening of the whole *sūrah* after the *al-hurūf al-muqāṭa'ah* in the first verse. It opens with "(This is) a mention (or reminder) of the (special) *raḥmah* of your Lord (O Muḥammad) upon his *'abd* (slave), Zakariyyā," *dhikru raḥmati rabbika 'abdahū*

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<sup>131</sup> Plural of *sūrah* in Arabic.

<sup>132</sup> Sayyid Quṭb, *In The Shade of the Qur'ān*, vol. 3, [no publication information], 62, accessed: October 31, 2021, [https://www.kalamullah.com/Books/InTheShadeOfTheQuranSayyidQutb/volume\\_3\\_surah\\_4.pdf](https://www.kalamullah.com/Books/InTheShadeOfTheQuranSayyidQutb/volume_3_surah_4.pdf).

*Zakariyyā*. Then, it introduces the word *idh*, elaborating on the time of the bestowment of this *rahmah* and what it entails, "... *idh nādā rabbahu nidā'an khafīyyā*, (...when he called upon his *rabb* a private (secret) call)."<sup>133</sup>

The prelude sets the tone for the story; it has three major components: the existence of a *rabb* (Lord), to whom *Zakariyyā* confides and pleads, his *'abd* (slave) by the name of *Zakariyyā*, and the *rahmah* bestowed upon him on the specific afore-mentioned incident, "...*idh nādā rabbahū nidā'an khafīyyā*...."<sup>134</sup> The *Rabb* is the master and owner of the *'abd*, the manager of his affairs who helps him when in distress and grants his plea.<sup>135</sup> The *'abd* asks his *Rabb* for his *rahmah* to fulfill his needs and solicitations.<sup>136</sup> The *rahmah* in discussion descends at a specific dire situation of the *'abd*. The three main components play significantly in manifesting the type of *rahmah* fluxing out upon *Zakariyyā*, not only the fact that it had happened (by God answering his prayer) but more so in what way it happens.<sup>137</sup>

*Sūrah Maryam* expresses the desperation of *Zakariyyā* as an *'abd* for the *rahmah* of his *Rabb* in different ways:

- a) God uses a more specific verb, *nādā* to express the act of prayer by *Zakariyyā*,<sup>138</sup> and not the general verb to call *da'ā*, as in the case of his story in *sūrah Āli'*

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<sup>133</sup> Qur'an 19: 2-3.

<sup>134</sup> Abū Hāmid Muḥammad bin Muḥammad Al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God, al Maqṣad al-Asnā fī Sharḥ Asmā' Allāh al-Ḥusnā*, translated by David B. Burrell and Nazih Daher (Cambridge: Islamic Text Society, 2007), 52. The three components align with the characteristics of *al-rahmah* mentioned in this book.

<sup>135</sup> Sulaimān ibn Ibrāhīm al-Lāhim, *al-Lubāb fī Tafsīr fī al-Isti'ādḥah wa al-Basmalah wa Fātiḥati al-Kitāb* [The Core in Interpreting the Isti'ādḥah and the Basmalah and the Opening of the Book] (Riyād: Dār al-Muslim, 1999), 226-227. See these pages for the elaboration on the meaning of '*al-Rabb*.'

<sup>136</sup> al-Lāhim, *al Lubāb*, 258-261. See these pages for an elaborative discussion on the meaning of the title '*al-'abd*' for many of God's prophets.

<sup>137</sup> Aḥmad Muṣṭafā al-Marāghī, *Tafsīr al-Marāghī* (Cairo: Sharīkah Maktab Maṭba' al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa awlādūh bi Miṣr, 1946), 34, accessed November 2021.

[https://archive.org/details/tafseer\\_mrighi/mrighi00/mode/1up](https://archive.org/details/tafseer_mrighi/mrighi00/mode/1up).

<sup>138</sup> Qur'ān 19:3. As stated in this verse: "*idh nādā rabbahu nidā'an khafīyyā*...."

Īmrān.<sup>139</sup> *Nādā* is more specific than *da'ā* because it carries a basic meaning of calling loudly upon request hoping it would be known and answered.<sup>140</sup>

- b) This call is further specified by a *maf'ūl mutlaq* (an adverb) that lexically denotes a secret call<sup>141</sup> or a silent call, *nidāan khafiyyā*. There are several reasons why a call can be soft or in secret. Firstly, the call directs toward the One qualified to listen, even if the sound is hidden deep in the heart. Secondly, the hope that the prayer would be sincerer in the eyes of God if done secretly. Thirdly, despite his utmost effort to call out to God, the call came out soft because of his old age.<sup>142</sup>
- c) The subsequent parts of the prayer urgently appeal for a merciful miracle otherwise deemed impossible to humankind, ending with a confirming conviction based on previous positive experiences.<sup>143</sup> Zakariyyā said, "My Lord, indeed my bones have weakened, and my head has filled with white, and never have I been in my supplication to You, my Lord, unhappy [i.e., disappointed]. Zakariyyā humbly confesses his weakness - his crippling old body (*my bones are weak, and my head is ignited with white hair*) and his satisfactory experience in confiding God his needs hitherto (*and never have I been, in my supplication to You, my Lord, unhappy*). His confession of his weakness is indeed an act of *istirhām* through this particular conveyance, anticipating that God will grant His divine *rahmah*.<sup>144</sup>
- d) He then proceeds with the main reasons for his supplication; "and indeed, I fear the successors after me, and my wife has been barren, so give me from Yourself an heir." <sup>145</sup> Having no children of his own during his advanced years and not to mention his wife's barrenness (*wa imraatī 'āqirā*), he confesses to God his worst

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<sup>139</sup> Qur'an 3:38. As stated in this verse: "*hunalika da'ā Zakariyyā rabbahū....*"

<sup>140</sup> Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn 'Ashūr, *al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr* [Interpretation of verification and enlightenment], al-Bāḥith al-Qur'ānī, al-Nuqāyah, accessed June 13, 2021. <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/19/2>.

<sup>141</sup> Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-Tabarī, *Tafsīr al-Tabarī Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīli Āyi al-Qur'ān* [The Exegesis of Tabarī, The Comprehensive Exposition of the Interpretation of the Verses of the Qur'an], al-Bāḥith al-Qur'ānī, al-Nuqāyah, accessed June 15, 2021, <https://tafsir.app/tabari/19/3>.

<sup>142</sup> Ibn 'Ashūr, *al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/19/2>.

<sup>143</sup> Qur'an 19:4. He confesses his profound weakness as an 'abd and his dependence upon a *rabb* who never has disappointed him in this verse: "*Qāla rabbī innī wahana al-aẓmu minnī washta'alā al-ra'su shaibā wa lam akun bi du'ā'ika rabbi shaqiyyā.*"

<sup>144</sup> Ibn 'Ashūr, *al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/19/5>.

<sup>145</sup> Qur'an 19:5. As stated in this verse: "*wa innī khiftu almawāliya min warāī, wa kānat imraatī 'āqiran fa hab lī min ladunka waliyyā.*"

fears. He dreads that his *al-mawālī*, those of his blood who will inherit from him, be it his brother or the children of his uncle,<sup>146</sup> or some say *al-kalālah*,<sup>147</sup> coming before him, or those after him, will not continue his legacy in serving God. His family, his brothers, and his cousins were all narrated ignoble. Thus he fears that they will not continue his mission of preserving and reviving the religion of God upon the people and that they will instead corrupt it.<sup>148</sup> Zakariyyā specifically asks God in this verse, a *waliy* from his own loins,<sup>149</sup> who will inherit from him: knowledge, intelligence, and enlightenment to continue the religion of God<sup>150</sup> and from the family of Ya'qūb<sup>151</sup> expertise, kingdoms, and prophethood.<sup>152</sup> As we see in the same verse, he also wishes that his heir will be *raḍiyyan*, which depicts several meanings; that of being a prophet who always pleases God, being pleasing in conducting his role amongst people by being chaste and far from sins, always performing deeds which result in the pleasure of God<sup>153</sup> (*riḍwān Allāh*).<sup>154</sup>

These gestures, magnified by specific word applications, solidify the inherited characteristics of Zakariyyā as an *'abd*. They express the destitute condition of a *marḥūm*, one in desperate need of *raḥmah* from the only one who can give what the *'abd* needs. The proceeding section that discusses the concern of Zakariyyā wanting a *waliy*, an inheritor, who will continue serving his master (*Rabb*) God after his death, will also show his loyalty to his master as a servant.

Hence the above descriptions convey the feelings of divine *raḥmah* from two contrasting perspectives; by the one who requests it and by the One who bestows it

<sup>146</sup> Abu al-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf* [The Revealer], al-Bāḥith al-Qur'ānī. Al-Nuqāyah, accessed 2021, <https://tafsir.app/kashaf/19/5>.

<sup>147</sup> Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī Jāmi' al-Bayān' an Ta'wīli Āyi al-Qur'ān* [The Exegesis of Ṭabarī, The Comprehensive Exposition of the Interpretation of the Verses of the Qur'ān], accessed June 15, 2021, <https://tafsir.app/tabari/19/5>.

<sup>148</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, <https://tafsir.app/kashaf/19/5>.

<sup>149</sup> Qur'an 19:6. As the verse stated: "*yarithunī wa yarithū Āli Ya'qūb, wa ij' alhu Rabbī raḍiyyā*".

<sup>150</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, <https://tafsir.app/kashaf/19/5>.

<sup>151</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, <https://tafsir.app/tabari/19/5>

<sup>152</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, <https://tafsir.app/tabari/19/5>; Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, <https://tafsir.app/kashaf/19/5/>

<sup>153</sup> Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Rāzī*, al-Bāḥith al-Qur'ānī, al-Nuqāyah, <https://tafsir.app/alrazi/19/6>.

<sup>154</sup> Qur'an 19:6. "*wa ij' alhu Rabbī raḍiyyā*".

upon. The first shows the actions of seeking *al-rahmah* or *al-istirhām* by the 'abd as a *marḥūm* as summarized in the following:

- (1) The depiction of the prayer by the adverb (*nidā'an khafīyyā*) portrays softness and dire need at the same time.
- (2) The way Zakariyyā expresses his destitution in the prologue of the prayer depicts his fear and dire concerns.
- (3) The confession of Zakariyyā that God never, during all of this time, had ever disappointed him. This experience shows a personal experience alluding to his conviction as an 'abd always in need of a *rabb*. Moreover, it implies how mercifully generous his *Rabb* is, a God full of *rahmah*.
- (4) The viewpoint that Zakariyyā is inspired to supplicate a prayer that will save not only his family but also his people from going astray.

Conversely, the latter shapes the bestowments of the notion of *al-rahmah* from God to the *marḥūm*, also known as *al-tarahḥum*, as summarized by the following:

- (1) The intent of the prayer to continue a noble and divine mission leads to divine *rahmah* in the form of a prophet, Yaḥyā, and the continuous divine message that he will vehemently hold on to.<sup>155</sup> This gift substantiates what Hārūn bin Mūsā, in his book *al-Wujūh wa al-Nazā'ir*, considers as parts of the meanings of the word '*rahmah*' in the Qur'ān of prophethood and the true religion of God.<sup>156</sup>
- (2) The intent of the prayer leads to divine *rahmah* in the form of a distinguished child directly chosen and named by God. This child emanates Godlike characteristics abundantly (as requested by Zakariyyā: '*fa hab lī min ladunka waliyyā'*'),<sup>157</sup> and God designates his name directly. The next section of the verse will elaborate on this issue in detail.

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<sup>155</sup> Muṣṭafā Muslim, and Najbah 'Ulamā' al-Tafsīr wa 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān. *Al-Tafsīr al-Mawdū'ī li Suwar al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* [Thematic Based Exegesis for the Chapters of the Glorious Qur'ān], vol. 4, (Sharjah: Jāmi'ah al-Sharjah, 2010), 422, PDF.

<sup>156</sup> Hārūn bin Mūsā, *al-Wujūh wa al-Nazā'ir fi al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, (Dār al-Ḥurriyyah li al-Ṭabā'ah, Baghdād: 1989), 54.

<sup>157</sup> Qur'an 19:5.

### 3.1.2. Components of *al-Raḥmah* in the Response of Zakariyyā's Plea, in the Identification of the Responder, and in the Content of the Response

Verse 7 in *sūrah* Maryam<sup>158</sup> forces the listener to notice a personal call first, as Suyūṭī, in his *Itqān* mentions the importance of the one called directly by name in the Qur'ān. This private call contained in this response, *yā Zakariyyā!*, is quite distinct from that of verse 39 in Āli' Imrān, where the emphasis is the direct calling of the angels towards him giving the glad tidings from God.<sup>159</sup> Here, some exegetes have considered this particular call to Zakariyyā by name as a call directly from God, and the context of the verses before and after this occurrence is that of Zakariyyā's deep conversation with God directly.<sup>160</sup> If this were an answer delivered by an angel, for example, then the flow of the conversations would have been distorted, as the proceeding verse expresses Zakariyyā's amazement directed to God himself, and not towards an angelic messenger as he said, "My Lord, how will I have a boy when my wife has been barren, and I have reached extreme old age?"<sup>161</sup> This direct conversation between God and Zakariyyā followed by an answer which he received from God directly, is a strong indication of divine *raḥmah* because it is a unique occurrence and permission from God that He rarely gives to anyone. Through it, God directly assures the one who pleads that He hears and answers his prayer - that he is worthy in the eyes of God.

The verse also directs the listener toward the word *ghulām*, which is much different from *walad*, the former being more specific, a young boy, while the latter is more general and

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<sup>158</sup> Qur'ān 19:7. As stated by the verse: *Yā Zakariyyā innā nubashiruka bi ghulāmin ismuhu Yaḥyā lam naj'al lahu min qablu samiyyā*. ([He was told], "O Zechariah, indeed We give you good tidings of a boy whose name will be John. We have not assigned to any before [this] name.")).

<sup>159</sup> Qur'ān 3:39. As stated by the verse: *Fanādat-hu almalā-ikatu wa huwa qā-imun yuṣallī fī al-mihrābi anna Allāha yubashshiruka bi Yaḥyā muṣaddiqan bikalimātin minna Allāhi wasayyidan wahaṣūran wa nabiyyan mina aṣṣālihīn* (So the angels called him while he was standing in prayer in the chamber, "Indeed, Allah gives you good tidings of John, confirming a word from Allah and [who will be] honorable, abstaining [from women], and a prophet from among the righteous.").

<sup>160</sup> Al-Rāzī, *Mafāṭih al-Ghaib*, <https://tafsir.app/alrazi/19/7>. He mentions: "It is incumbent that the calling is from Allāh the Exalted, if not the organization (of the verse) is ruined *ووجب أن يكون النداء من الله تعالى وإلا لفسد النظم*."

<sup>161</sup> Qur'ān 19:8. As stated in the verse: "*Rabbī annā yakūnu lī ghulāmun wa kānat imrā'atī 'āqira?*"

used for both genders.<sup>162</sup> The word *ghulām* also signifies that the boy will benefit others, as boys, during this time of age, are already capable of performing various manual tasks and possess some maturity. Even more, this boy will have a name given directly by God, whose name no one else in the universe has ever had before, of the greatest honors and *rahmah* one can ever possess. A name will be part of a soul from birth to death until the hereafter.<sup>163</sup>

It is worth noting that the phrase, *lam naj'al lahu min qablu samiyya*, from which the above analysis carries on, resembles that of verse 65 of the same *sūrah*, in the context of the uniqueness of God, His incomparable traits and characteristics, *hal ta'lamu lahu samiyya*. This transpiration further emphasizes the specialness of Yaḥya in terms of his God-given name as well as the possibility that God never created anyone in the universe like him,<sup>164</sup> never disobeying God before or after prophethood,<sup>165</sup> forever chaste, pleasing to God.<sup>166</sup> According to ibn 'Abbās, as mentioned in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, his uniqueness is not only because of these two aspects but also in the sense that none in the universe has been born from a barren and aged mother as his.<sup>167</sup> Even in the case of Prophet Ibrāhīm and his wife Sarah, Prophet Ishāq's birth was remarkable because they were at a dire old age ('*ajūz*).<sup>168</sup> However, in this context, the word '*āqir*' does not appear as it does in *sūrah* Maryam.<sup>169</sup> Thus, Yaḥya's birth was exceptional, viewed from this angle.

To conclude, there are at least five possible expressions of honor and divine *rahmah* here, both for Zakariyyā and his future son, Yaḥya, firstly in the fact that Zakariyyā was

<sup>162</sup> Faḍīl al-Samārā'ī, "Fī Sūrah Maryam wa 'Āli 'Imrān, al-Farq bayna Ghulām wa Walad", filmed 2015, Youtube Video, 4:18. <https://youtu.be/bv8tTcQIKTQ>.

<sup>163</sup> Al-Rāzī, *Mafātīh al-Ghaib*, <https://tafsir.app/alrazi/19/7>.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid. al-Rāzī opines a few perspectives in regards to the connection between the divine characters of Prophet Yaḥyā, such as *ḥaṣura* and *sayyidā*, and his unique God-given name Yaḥyā along with the prayer of Zakariyyā of a child who is pleasing to God (*raḍiyyā*). They are the answers to his prayer.

<sup>165</sup> Tafsir al-Qushairī (465 H)

(<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=3&tTafsirNo=31&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=7&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>).

<sup>166</sup> Al-Rāzī, *Mafātīh al-Ghaib*, <https://tafsir.app/alrazi/19/7>.

<sup>167</sup> Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, al-Bāḥith al-Qur'ānī, al-Nuqāyah, accessed October 2021, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-katheer/19/7>.

<sup>168</sup> Qur'ān 11:72-73.

<sup>169</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-katheer/19/7>.

addressed directly by God by name, affirming the granting of his wish, secondly his son Yaḥyā has a God-given name, thirdly in the fact that it is a brand new name that no one has ever had, fourthly the great value of this title itself which carries the meaning of *he lives*.<sup>170</sup> He lives, despite his barren mother, one whom human logic claims as eternally incapable of delivering life, miraculously giving life to her barrenness.<sup>171</sup> Lastly, Yaḥyā is not only unique in his namesake but also in his exceptional divine characteristics and his miraculous birth.

### 3.1.3. Divine *al-Raḥmah* in Zakariyyā's Amazement "How can I have a son...?"

Consider this sentence found in the prelude of *sūrah* Maryam: "*wa kānat imrā'ati 'āqirā* (And my wife has been barren)." *Sūrah* Maryam repeats it twice; first in Zakariyyā's prayer in verse five, shown in bold: *wa innī khiftu al-mawālī min warā'ī wa kānat imraatī 'āqirā*<sup>172</sup> and in verse eight: *Qāla Rabbī annā yakūnu lī ghulamun wa kānat imraatī 'āqiran wa qad balaghtu min al-kibari 'itiyyā* (He said, "My Lord, how will I have a boy when my wife has been barren and I have reached extreme old age?").

The prelude of *sūrah* Maryam mentions this sentence after and alongside "*wa khiftu almawālī min warā'ī...*" as the very reasons why he made the prayer. The fact that His *al-mawālī* (his relatives) are ignoble and his wife has always been barren are two valid causes for his inability to have an heir who will preserve his prophetic mission. In this part of the *sūrah*, God also shows that He has always answered his prayers, even until and during his fragile state. This symbolic expression of extreme old age, and proximity to death, becomes a preamble to show the urgency of his request to God.

<sup>170</sup> Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī Ibn Muḥammad Al-Māwardī, *Tafsīr al-Māwardī*, or *al-Nukat wa al-'Uyūn* [Exegesis of 'Subtle Points and Deeper Views], al-Bāḥīth al-Qur'ānī, al-Nuqāyah, accessed November 20, 2022 <https://tafsir.app/almawirdee/19/7>. Al-Māwardī opined that the *bushrā* (glad tidings) delivered to Zakariyyā carries three remarkable things: the acceptance of the prayer in a direct manner, the bestowment of a boy, which indicates (the gifting of) strength, and the uniqueness of the name *Yaḥyā*.

<sup>171</sup> Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Rāzī*, <https://tafsir.app/alrazi/19/7>.

<sup>172</sup> As part of the following verses, Qur'ān 19:4-7  
 قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَهَنَ الْعَظْمُ مِنِّي وَأُسْنَعَلُ الرِّاسُ شَيْبًا وَلَمْ أَكُنْ بِدُعَائِكَ رَبِّ سَعِيًّا  
 وَإِنِّي خِفْتُ الْمَوْلَىٰ مِن وَّرَائِي وَكَانَتِ امْرَأَتِي عَاقِرًا فَهَبْ لِي مِن لَّدُنكَ وَلِيًّا  
 يَرْتَبِّي وَيَرِّثْ مِنِّي أَلِيعْقُوبَ إِنِّي أَجْعَلُهُ رَبِّ رَضِيًّا  
 يَا زَكَرِيَّا إِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلَامٍ اسْمُهُ يَحْيَىٰ لَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِن قَبْلُ سَمِيًّا

While looking into the second mention of the sentence *wa kānat imraatī 'āqirā*, we find that it is the first reaction to God's glad tiding to Zakariyyā about the gift of a young boy. He says, "*annā yakūnu lī ghulām (how can I have a young boy) ...*". It comes first before the mentioning of his old age, "*wa balaghtu min al-kibari' itiyā* (and I have reached old age severely) ..." showing that the first reason for questioning how a young boy can come alive through his lineage is the barrenness of his wife, and second, his current state of old age. *'Itiyā*, which did not come in the first mention, is presented here to depict the severity of his advanced age giving the impression of futility to function in procreating. Thus his questioning or *al-isti'lām* of the *how-ness* of all of the future happenings arrives in the expression of *annā yakūnu lī ghulām (how can I have a young boy).*"

Hence these verses in *sūrah* Maryam portray part of the reasons for the special *rahmah* descending to Zakariyyā, what kind of *rahmah* this is. Interestingly enough, it strikes a resemblance with the *rahmah* bestowed upon the mother of Maryam, Ḥannah bint Fāqūdh.<sup>173</sup> She, as Zakariyyā and his wife, had waited for a child for a long time<sup>174</sup> and thought that she, like Zakariyyā's wife, was also barren.<sup>175</sup>

As we will see further down the *sūrah*, it will be evident that the divine *rahmah* reflected in this part of *the sūrah* expresses the endowment of particular children in impossible conditions, such as the permanent infertility of a woman.

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<sup>173</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, the first paragraph of the exegesis of verse 36 in *sūrah* Āli' Imrān, accessed January 13, 2023, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-katheer/3/36>.

<sup>174</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, <https://tafsir.app/kashaf/3/40> and Abu 'Abdullāh Al-Qurtubī, *Tafsīr al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān* [A Compilation of the Rulings in the Qur'ān], al-Bāḥith al-Qur'ānī, al-Nuqāyah, accessed January 13, 2023, <https://tafsir.app/qurtubi/19/8>.

<sup>175</sup> Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Rāzī*, <https://tafsir.app/alrazi/3/36>. Tafsīr I. al-Rāzī reports that 'Ikrimah mentioned the barrenness of the wife of 'Imrān, Ḥannah. It was also mentioned in a narration from Muhammad Ibn Ishāq that there were no children of her own until she reached an advanced age.

### 3.1.4. The Feeling of Ease as a *Rahmah* in God's Simple Answer, "And it (the matter) is easy for Me..."

God's reply to Zakariyyā's amazement<sup>176</sup> all centers around the sentence *wa huwa 'alayya hayyin*.<sup>177</sup> Unlike in *sūrah* Āli 'Imrān, the emphasis is not that of the power and might of God conducting whatever He may so please and wish,<sup>178</sup> but how easy is the matter for God since it is also He who creates Zakariyyā from nothingness.<sup>179</sup> First, let us look at the significant meanings of this sentence as summarized by some major exegetes:

- (1) The word *hayyin* acts more as a metaphor since there is no difference or degree in hardness or easiness in terms of the action of God. All He has to say is *Be!*, and it becomes.<sup>180</sup>
- (2) In this case, God's words are those of *al-takwīnī*, that His statements also carry intention, capability, and might besides information. With them, He creates and conducts affairs. Adding *hayyin* further supports this meaning and cancels any amazement or *ta'ajub* from the listener.<sup>181</sup>
- (3) The sentence, "*wa huwa 'alayya hayyin*," replies to Prophet Zakariyyā's reaction, "*annā yakūnu lī ghulām...*" questioning the *howness* of the birth of the young boy. But God replies that the *howness* does not matter through the word *hayyin*. He can easily create the boy through regular reproduction or simply by saying *be* (thus he will become), as was the matter when He brought the soul into existence from nothingness before. The last part of the verse reflects this sense; *wa qad khalaqtuka min qablu wa lam taku shai'a*.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Qur'ān 19:8 (*Qāla Rabbī annā yakūnu lī ghulāmun wa kānat imraatī 'aqīran wa qad balaghtu min al-kibari 'itīyyā* (He said, "My Lord, how will I have a boy when my wife has been barren and I have reached extreme old age?").

<sup>177</sup> Qur'ān 19:9: "...and (the matter) it is easy upon me".

<sup>178</sup> Extracted from Qur'ān 3:40, (*Qāla kadhālika Allāhu yaf'alu mā yashā'*, He (The angel) said, "Such is Allāh, He does what He wills.").

<sup>179</sup> Qur'ān 19:9 (*Qāla kadhālika qāla rabbuka huwa 'alayyā hayyin wa qad khalaqtuka min qablu wa lam taku shai'a* ([An angel] said, "Thus [it will be]; your Lord says, 'It is easy for Me, for I created you before, while you were nothing.'").

<sup>180</sup> Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Rāzī*, <https://tafsir.app/alrazi/19/9>.

<sup>181</sup> Ibn 'Ashūr, *al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/19/9>.

<sup>182</sup> Al-Īmām Aḥmad bin 'Umar (618H) *Tafsīr al-tilāwāt al-Najamiyyah fi al-Tafsīr al-Ishārī al-Şūfī*. (<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=3&tTafsirNo=97&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=9&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>).

(4) God emphasizes that the creation of a young boy through normal means of procreation is much simpler than the creation from nothingness through Ādam. All souls, including that of Zakariyyā, are inherently created through his design and production from nothing. This creation is more arduous than the creation of Yaḥyā, which, although non-conventional, still uses indirect means of procreation. This logic proves true the statement of God to Prophet Zakariyyā, *'Innā nubashiruka bi ghulāmin ismuhu Yaḥya...*<sup>183</sup>

Summarizing from the above discussion, verse nine of *sūrah* Maryam presents an ambiance of *rahmah* through God's direct answers to his servant Zakariyyā, for not everyone gets a reply from God directly. The *rahmah* is also subtly embedded in God's use of the word *hayyin*, communicating to Prophet Zakariyyā not to worry about the howness of his soon-to-be son's creation; it is simpler than his own creation from nothingness. God does not emphasize His general might and power as the creator of every single thing in the universe; the fact that He does whatever He intends, as depicted in verse forty in *sūrah* Ālī 'Imrān. On the contrary, there is a subtle gesture of assurance in His statement to Zakariyyā that the process is more than easy for Him.

### 3.1.5. Divine *al-Rahmah* in Yaḥyā

The birth of Yaḥyā is the first representation in *Sūrah* Maryam of the *rahmah* of God through the gifting without strings<sup>184</sup> (*hibah*) of a righteous child.<sup>185</sup> This verb *hibah* has always been used in the Qur'ān whenever the prophets ask for righteous offspring<sup>186</sup> or when God informs someone that he will be granted righteous offspring.<sup>187</sup> It generally connotes a plethora of profoundly valuable gifts from God to certain chosen people,<sup>188</sup>

<sup>183</sup> al-Shawkānī (1250 H) Tafsīr Fath al-Qadīr, <https://tafsir.app/fath-alcadeer/19/9>.

<sup>184</sup> Muḥammad ibn Mukarram ibn `Alī ibn Aḥmad ibn Manzūr. s.v. "رب", in *Lisān al-'Arab* [The Arabic Language], Arabic Almanac v6.1, Mawrid Reader v3.1, November 2, 2021, <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#la=4929>.

<sup>185</sup> See Qur'ān 19:5. Here, Zakariyyā uses the verb *wahaba* (in the imperative form: *hab!*) in his plea to God for a *waliy* sent by God himself, "*fa ḥablī min ladunka waliyyā.*"

<sup>186</sup> Qur'ān 3:37, 37:100.

<sup>187</sup> See Qur'ān 21:72, 90, 38:30, 14:41, 19:19 & 49-50.

<sup>188</sup> Quraish Shihab, s.v. "وهب" in *Ensiklopedia Al-Quran: Kajian Kosa Kata, Quraish Shihab* [Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān, A Study in Vocabulary], Arabic Almanac v6.1, Mawrid Reader v3.1, accessed January 14, 2023, <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#ens=1048>.

including those gifts of children. In the relevant verse in *sūrah* Maryam, God's act of informing Zakariyyā about the gifting of an unusual child is represented by the verb *bashara* (its verbal noun of *bishārah* means good news that causes the skin tone of the receiver to change)<sup>189</sup> signifying the gifting as something that will make the parents happy extraordinarily,<sup>190</sup> consequently portraying a special *rahmah* from God to His distinguished slaves.

Children themselves are *rahmah* to the parent; having children instills the exact feeling into the hearts of the parents. There were many incidents at the time of the Prophet, Muḥammad, where he would point out the acts of parents towards the children as *rahmah* God specifically cast in their hearts. One incident was when his wife 'Ā'ishah gave a Beduin woman and her two small children three dates. The woman gave each of her children one day and saved one for herself. In the end, however, the two children still looked at her (as if asking for more). Thus she divided her share of the date into two so each child could have more. The Prophet (Muḥammad) saw 'Ā'ishah's amazement at this phenomenon and said to her, "Why are you so surprised? Allāh has bestowed upon her His *rahmah* by her *rahmah* for her little two little children."<sup>191</sup> Another incident was when the Prophet himself mourned the death of his young grandson, and the companions asked him about the incident. He answered, "This is the *rahmah* Allah creates in the hearts of His slaves."<sup>192</sup>

Furthermore, righteous children are *qurratu al-'ain* (source of happiness) for the parents. In the Qur'ān, the slaves of *al-Raḥmān* (*'ibād al-Raḥmān*) plead to God to give them *qurratu al-'ain* in their spouses and children,<sup>193</sup> as did the wife of Fir'āun upon finding infant Mūsā.<sup>194</sup> They are also a source of *rahmah* to the parents not only in this world but

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<sup>189</sup> Malik Ghulam Farid, s.v. "بشر," *DICTIONARY OF THE HOLY QUR'AN with References and Explanation of the Text* (Surrey: Islam International Publications Limited, 2006), 69, PDF.

<sup>190</sup> Qur'ān 15:53, 19:7, 37:101, 51:28.

<sup>191</sup> Muttafaqun 'alaih, Riyad as-Salihin Hadith 29, Chapter 3: Patience and Perseverance, Book: The Book of Miscellany, <https://sunnah.com/riyadussalihin:29>.

<sup>192</sup> Muttafaqun 'alaih, Riyad as-Salihin Hadith 926, Chapter 153: The Ruling of Crying and Wailing over a Dead Person, Book 6: The Book of Visiting the Sick, <https://sunnah.com/riyadussalihin:926>.

<sup>193</sup> Qur'ān 25:74.

<sup>194</sup> Qur'ān 28:9.

also in the hereafter, where they will become intercessors (*al-shafā'āt*) for their parents for their entrance to heaven (*al-Jannah*).<sup>195</sup> They are indeed the source of comfort and happiness, a special *rahmah* notably for the parents, because of their specific characteristics. They ask for their forgiveness, are grateful to them,<sup>196</sup> and obey them as much as they can as long as it is not against God's commands and affection.<sup>197</sup> They repent and oft-returning to God.<sup>198</sup> They guard their actions, saving not only themselves but their parents from the anger of God.<sup>199</sup> They will establish prayer, command good and forbid evil, and they will observe patience.<sup>200</sup> They are humble<sup>201</sup> and far from being tyrant-ly disobedient.<sup>202</sup> They speak softly and gently, never in a hurry, reflecting patience toward others.<sup>203</sup>

As we will decipher below, Yaḥyā's characteristics reflect that of a righteous child. In addition, he is a prophet of God, which is the ultimate depiction of uprightness. Sūrah Maryam elaborates on the characteristics of Prophet Yaḥyā in the following ways:

- (1) *Yā Yaḥyā, khudhi alkitāba bi quwwah wa ātaināhu al-ḥukma ṣabiyyan*, that he would take the book firmly while having wisdom from a very early age.<sup>204</sup>

<sup>195</sup> Aḥmad ibn Shu'ayb Al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan an-Nasa'i: The Book of Funerals: Chapter – One Who Loses Three: Hadith 1876*, Sunnah.com, accessed January 12, 2023. <https://sunnah.com/nasai:1876>, and Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Khaṭīb Al-Tabrīzī, *Mishkāt al-Maṣābiḥ* [The Niche of Lanterns]: The Excellent Qualities of the Qur'an: Hadith 2139. <https://sunnah.com/mishkat:2139>.

<sup>196</sup> Qur'ān 31:14.

<sup>197</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr Jāmi' al-Bayān an Ta'wīl Āyy al-Qur'ān*,

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=1&tSoraNo=31&tAyahNo=15&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>198</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr Jāmi' al-Bayān an Ta'wīl Āyy al-Qur'ān*,

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=1&tSoraNo=31&tAyahNo=15&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>199</sup> Qur'ān 31:16.

<sup>200</sup> Qur'ān 31:17.

<sup>201</sup> Qur'ān 31:18.

<sup>202</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr Jāmi' al-Bayān*,

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=1&tSoraNo=31&tAyahNo=18&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>203</sup> Qur'ān 31:19.

<sup>204</sup> Qur'ān 19:12, "[Allah said], "O John, take the Scripture [i.e., adhere to it] with determination. And We gave him judgment [while yet] a boy." (Translations by Saheeh International).

- (2) *Wa ḥanānan min ladunnā wa zakāh, wa kāna taqiyyā.* He was also divinely affectionate and gentle, and he was pure and God-fearing.<sup>205</sup>
- (3) *Wa barran bi wāliḍayhi wa lam yakun jabbāran 'āṣiyyā.* He was extraordinarily dutiful and never a tyrant, disobedient to his parents.<sup>206</sup>
- (4) *Wa salāmun 'alayhi yawma wulida wa yawma yamūtu wa yawma yub 'athu ḥayyā.* He had peace on the day he was born, on the day he dies, and on the day he will be resurrected.<sup>207</sup>

Although it is clear that there are four respective verses, these verses accumulatively portray nine, not four, noble characteristics of Prophet Yaḥyā. These unusual merits engrained in this child are special *raḥmah* from God.<sup>208</sup> Each of these will now be discussed, especially in relation to the nuances of divine *raḥmah*.

### 3.1.5.1. Having Wisdom from a Young Age

*Al-ḥukm*, wisdom, generally comes with age, with the experiences someone gains throughout life. Hence, when someone acquires this trait early on, he is extraordinary. In the case of Yaḥyā, however, this uniqueness is even amplified because it is not something that he acquires himself through experiences, rather God himself bestows upon him without any means nor intermediaries, signified by the verb '*ātaynāhu*' (We gave him).<sup>209</sup> God gave him this trait early in life when most humans would still know nothing but play, as narrated, "The children used to invite Yaḥyā to play, but he would reply, *I was not created to play.*"<sup>210</sup> Aside from wisdom, some exegetes have opined that it can also mean

<sup>205</sup> Qur'ān 19:13, "And affection from Us and purity, and he was fearing of Allah." (Translations by Saheeh International).

<sup>206</sup> Qur'ān 19:14, "And dutiful to his parents, and he was not a disobedient tyrant." (Translations by Saheeh International).

<sup>207</sup> Qur'ān 19:15, "And peace be upon him the day he was born and the day he dies and the day he is raised alive." (Translations by Saheeh International).

<sup>208</sup> Muṣṭafā Muslim and Najbah 'Ulamā', *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*, 4:422.

<sup>209</sup> Qur'ān 19:12.

<sup>210</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, <https://tafsir.app/tabari/19/12> (although I believe the last part where it says *fa anzala Allahu "wa ātaināhu al-ḥukma ṣabiyyā"* (which means so Allah sent down...) seems to be problematic since how can the verse revealed at the time of Prophet Yaḥyā and not at the time of Prophet Muḥammad?). A narration in *Tafsīr al-Durr al-Manḥūr* by al-Ṣuyūfī mentioned a stronger narration from al-Ḥākim in his *Tārīkh* in which it was related in a ḥadīth that the youths said to Yaḥyā bin Zakariyyā,

prophethood or the wisdom and understanding of the rules of God,<sup>211</sup> and some the understanding of Tawrah and the religion.<sup>212</sup> This meaning thus relates to one of the meanings of *al-rahmah* opted by al-Tirmidhī<sup>213</sup> amongst other scholars of *al-Wujūh wa al-Nazāir*.

### 3.1.5.2. Being Divinely *Ḥanān*

Linguistically speaking, the word '*ḥanān*' is a verbal noun (*maṣdar*)<sup>214</sup> defined as *al-maḥabbah fī shafaqatin wa mail*, the love which exists in being compassionate and sympathetic towards something or someone, just as that found in the camel who leans towards its child (*ḥannat al-nāqatu 'alā waladihā*); or in the wife who leans lovingly towards her husband (*ḥannat al-imraati 'alā zawjihā*).<sup>215</sup> "*Taḥannana fulānun*' *alā fulānin*" is an expression of someone being loving, gentle, merciful, and sympathetic towards someone else. The word *ḥannān*,<sup>216</sup> on the other hand, can thus be seen as hyperbole for an attribute (*al-sighah al-mubālaghah*) expressed in the form *fa'āl*, derived from the verbal noun (*maṣdar*) *ḥanān* mentioned before. Similarly, the term *ḥannatuhu* means his wife in the stanza of the poem: *wa laylatin dhāti dujjī saraytu, wa lam taḍirni ḥannatun wa baytu...*,<sup>217</sup> and in the night, the possessor of darkness, I journeyed... no wife nor house hurt me. In the poem, the word *ḥannah* means *a wife*.

As for the attribute of Allāh *al-Ḥannān*, some refer to the following prophetic narration: "*Yabqā rajulun fī al-nāri yunādī alfa sannah: yā Ḥannān yā Mannān...*",<sup>218</sup> *A man*

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"Come with us to play." So Yaḥya replied, "We were not created to play. Let us go and pray." So this is the statement of Allāh ta'ālā, "...and We gave him wisdom in a young age." See <https://tafsir.app/aldur-almanthoor/19/12>.

<sup>211</sup> Abū Ḥayyān, *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, accessed May 25, 2022, <https://tafsir.app/albahr-almuheet/19/12>.

<sup>212</sup> Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, accessed May 25, 2022, <https://tafsir.app/kashaf/19/12>.

<sup>213</sup> al-Tirmidhī, *Taḥṣīl Nazāir al-Qur'ān*, 47-48.

<sup>214</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, <https://tafsir.app/tabari/19/12>.

<sup>215</sup> [86] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-katheer/19/12>.

<sup>216</sup> [87] Notice the extra nūn in the middle of the word, *ḥannān*, instead of *ḥanān*.

<sup>217</sup> [88] Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, <https://tafsir.app/tabari/19/12>.

<sup>218</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-katheer/19/12>, as quoted from al-Musnad of al-Īmām Ahmad.

*remains in hell while screaming for one thousand years, O Most Compassionate, Tender, Loving,<sup>219</sup> O the One who is Most beneficent.<sup>220</sup>*

### **3.1.5.2.1. Exegetical Meanings Carried in the Statement "*wa ḥanānan min ladunnā*"**

Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī[92]<sup>221</sup> reports a handful of opinions on the meaning of the statement, "*wa ḥanānan min ladunnā*":

- (1) As a special *rahmah*, mentioned by Qatādah.
- (2) As a gentle compassion and merciful love specifically from God (*al-ta'attuf min rabbihi 'alayhi*), as mentioned by Mujāhid.
- (3) As a special *maḥabbah* (love) from God, as mentioned by 'Ikrimah.
- (4) As a compassionate preference and inclination from God to him, according to others.
- (5) As an aggrandizement and honor from God towards him (*ta'zīman min ladunnā*), as mentioned by 'Aṭā' bin Abi Rabāh.

Ibn 'Āshūr, on the other hand, mentions that the attribute *ḥanān* here indicates uniqueness and not that of the conventional *ḥanān* a human can possess since the adjective *min ladunnā* proceeds it.<sup>222</sup> In addition, al-Rāzi elaborates on two main interpretations of the sentence *wa ḥanānan min ladunnā*; one from the point of view that it is an attribute of God himself manifested upon his creations, while the second depicts the noble character of Prophet Yaḥyā himself.

Considering it as an attribute of God, the statement is then considered *ma'tūf* (connected) towards *ṣabiyyān*, which then carries two more interpretations. The first is that God says, "*And we gave him wisdom at a young age and as an act of compassionate love from us to him,*" meaning that aside from giving him wisdom at a young age, we also did it with our

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<sup>219</sup> Wehr, s.v. "حن", in *Hans Wehr Dictionary*, 244, <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#hw4=257>.

<sup>220</sup> Wehr, s.v. "من", in *Hans Wehr Dictionary*, 1086, <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#hw4=1099>.

<sup>221</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, <https://tafsir.app/tabari/19/12>.

<sup>222</sup> Ibn 'Āshūr, *Tafsīr al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/19/12>.

exclusive compassion and love for Yaḥyā. Secondly, the pronoun *hu* in '*alayhi*' implies Prophet Zakariyyā instead of Prophet Yaḥyā. Howsoever this may be, there seems to be a problem since a pronoun in the Arabic language usually points to the closest reference, in this case, Yaḥyā, and not Zakariyyā.

If, on the other hand, *ḥanānan min ladunnā* were *ma 'tūf* towards the word '*al-hukma*,' then the verse connotes the fact that God also gave him (Yaḥyā) the characteristic of a special divinely *ḥanān*. The third possibility is that this compassionate act of God of giving wisdom to Prophet Yaḥyā at a young age is, in actuality, a gracious and generous gesture for his people (*ummah*) due to the guidance that Prophet Yaḥyā brings to them[94].<sup>223</sup>

Looking at all of these traits one by one, each of them relates to a contextual meaning of the word *raḥmah*. Just as having a child for a barren woman seems impossible to a human mind, so is having wisdom as a child and having a unique divine character of *ḥanān*. These are all expressions of divine *raḥmah* given only to God-selected individuals. Having wisdom at a young age enables one to make the right decisions in life much earlier than others. Brilliantness with time and the things that matter most in life is a blessing. Having a feature characteristic of *ḥanān* is a benediction because the word *ḥannān* carries the personas of *raḥmah* internally. Moreover, this character is not self-contained; it emanates toward others and its surroundings, making others feel gentleness, warmth, and compassionate *raḥmah*.

### **3.1.5.3. Having a Feature Characteristic of *Zakāh***

Combining the opinions of primary exegetes, the like of al-Ṭabarī, Abū Ḥayyān, al-Rāzī, and al-Zamakhsharī, the meanings of the word *zakāh* here consist of the following:

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<sup>223</sup> Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Rāzī*, <https://tafsir.app/alrazi/19/12>.

- (1) Being pure from sins and mistakes, only performing righteous actions pleasing to God,<sup>224</sup> and even more, performing them in addition to what is commonly done and sufficient.<sup>225</sup>
- (2) Yahya's being is an '*āmal ṣāliḥ*,' a righteous deed fully manifested.<sup>226</sup>
- (3) He is gentle to people and gives charity to them.<sup>227</sup>
- (4) He gives charity<sup>228</sup> on behalf of his parents,<sup>229</sup> or one whose life becomes a continuous alms for his two parents.<sup>230</sup>
- (5) God testifies his purity by giving him the best praise and testament.<sup>231</sup>

The word *zakāh* in the Qur'ān generally comes paired with the *fi'il itā'*, *itā al-zakāh*, the giving of the obligatory charity, except in two verses; the currently discussed verse thirteen of *sūrah* Maryam, and verse eighty-one in *sūrah* al-Kahf. It is relevant to note at this point that the meaning of this word, particularly in this *sūrah* based on point four above, the case of these two verses falls under the framework of the impact of the personality and actions of a child to the parents.

Verse eighty-one in *sūrah* al-Kahf, "*fa aradnā an yubaddilahumā Rabbuhumā khairan minhu zakātan wa aqraba ruḥmā*, (So we intended that their Lord should substitute for them one better than him in purity and nearer to mercy)."<sup>232</sup> uses the same word, *zakāh*, to express one of the characteristics missing from an ill-charactered child of righteous parents. Ḥiḍr.<sup>233</sup> annihilates this child as part of the plan and *rahmah* of God to give the parents a substitute child that will be pure instead, who will not burden them as righteous

<sup>224</sup> Opinioned by al-Ṭabarī (only using his body to perform righteous deeds), Ibn' Āshūr (the purity of his soul), Abū Ḥayyān (He is clean internally and externally and also able to purify others), Zamakhsharī (Purification), al-Rāzī (that he would be doing righteous deeds purely).

<sup>225</sup> According to Abū Ḥayyān.

<sup>226</sup> Al-Māwardī, Tafsīr al-Māwardī, <https://tafsir.app/almawirdee/19/13>.

<sup>227</sup> According to Zamakhsharī.

<sup>228</sup> According to al-Rāzī, Zamakhsharī.

<sup>229</sup> According to Abū Ḥayyān.

<sup>230</sup> As mentioned in Tafsīr al-Bahr al-Muḥīt of Abū Ḥayyān, as narrated by Ibn al-Sāib in the tafsīr of verse 13 of *sūrah* Maryam. (<https://tafsir.app/albahr-almuheet/19/13>)

<sup>231</sup> According to al-Rāzī.

<sup>232</sup> Translation by Saheeh International.

<sup>233</sup> Qur'ān 18:80 وَأَمَّا الْغُلَامُ فَكَانَ أَبَوَاهُ مُؤْمِنِينَ فَخَشِينَا أَنْ يُرْهِقَهُمَا طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا "And as for the boy, his parents were believers, and we feared that he would overburden them by transgression and disbelief."

parents in this world and the next.<sup>234</sup> In a similar context, God mentions this word in verse thirteen of *sūrah* Maryam about the future child of Prophet Zakariyyā, Prophet Yaḥyā, "*wa ātaynāhu al-hukma ṣabiyyan wa ḥanānan wa zakātan wa kāna taqīyyā*" whom God also mentioned as having the same unique character, *zakāh*. It is a special *rahma* because the child will continuously perform pure, righteous deeds and constantly purify himself from sins, which entails him as a living *zakāh* for both parents in this world and the next. Thus the overall meaning of this part of the verse based on the above interpolations and based on the position of the word itself in the sentence becomes:

- a) "... and We gave him wisdom (*al-hukma*) while being at a young age (*ṣabiyyān*) and while having a divinely gentle and compassionate nature (*wa ḥanānan min ladunnā*) and while having a pure character (*wa zakātan*)" when the word *zakāh* acts as a *ḥāl* and *ma'tūf* towards the word *ṣabiyyān*.
- b) Another possibility is when the word *zakāh* is connected directly to the word *al-hukma*, where the meaning thus becomes, "And we gave him wisdom while he was at a young age (*al-hukmā ṣabiyyān*) and (we gave him) a divinely gentle and compassionate character (*wa ḥanānan min ladunnā*), and a pure character devoting himself actions pleasing to God (*wa zakātan*)."

Either way, this reflects a great *rahmah* from God to Yaḥyā, as having a pure inner character saves one in this life and the next from the wrath and punishment of God. Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr and Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī recount this in a prophetic narration, "*Kullu banī Ādama ya'tī yawma al-qiyāmati wa lahu dhanbun illa mā kāna min Yaḥyā bin Zakariyyā* (All of the children of Ādam will come with a sin in the Day of Resurrection, except Yaḥyā bin Zakariyyā)."<sup>235</sup> This subsequently only results in the *riḍwān*, the pleasure of God. Consequently, this can only result in the contentment of his parents at the same time, thus making this a special divine *rahmāh* for both Prophet *Zakariyyā* and his wife, *'Īshā*.

<sup>234</sup> Abu al-Su'ūd, *Irshād al-'Aql al-Salīm*, <https://tafsir.app/abu-alsuod/19/13>.

<sup>235</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-katheer/19/13>.

#### 3.1.5.4. Having a Feature Characteristic of *Taqiyyā*

The verse continues with, "*wa kāna taqiyyā,*" (and he was very God-fearing and God-conscious). The word *taqiyyā* here is a *ṣifah* (adjective) in the form of *fa'īl* (doer) that means *mufta'īl* (also doer) from the *bāb ittiqā,*<sup>236</sup> one who possesses *al-taqwā* (God-fearing) all of the time. In this sense, most exegetes have all mentioned the meaning as one who is always obedient to the commands of God and abstains from those things which He forbids.

#### 3.1.5.5. Dutifulness and Gentleness Towards Parents

As this part of the *sūrah* continues, the reader again encounters the topics surrounding relationships between children and parents. In the following verse, God mentions three noble characteristics of Prophet Yaḥyā connected to this topic. The *sūrah* picks up as so, "...*wa barran bi wālidayhi, wa lam yakun jabbāran, 'āṣiyyā* (And dutiful to his parents, and he was not a disobedient tyrant)." Thus three specific traits are mentioned; being extremely dutiful to his parents, as indicated by the phrase *barran bi wālidayhi*, not being an oppressor or tyrant (*jabbāran*), and finally, not being rebellious ('*asīyyān*). These three inner characteristics mentioned are central indications of dutifulness and obedience to parents inarguably, as all of these words contain hyperbolic meanings, personifying these characteristics. In *barran*, for example, there is a hyperbole since it is a trait expressed in a *maṣḍar* (verbal noun) form. It has a superfluous meaning which the word *birr* does not possess,<sup>237</sup> although it also signifies being *dutiful*. The phrase '*barran bi wālidayhi*' connotes *ikrām* (generosity), *sa'yā* (striving),<sup>238</sup> and *iḥsān* (perfection) in dealing with his parents. The child does a variety of good deeds for the parents. The verse continues even further to portray the ever-appealing traits of Yaḥyā as a child towards his parents, *lam yakun jabbāran 'asiyyā*.

<sup>236</sup> Ibn Āshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/19/13>.

<sup>237</sup> Ibn Āshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/19/14>.

<sup>238</sup> Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīt*, <https://tafsir.app/albahr-almuheet/19/14>.

The word *jabbār* is the opposite of *līn*, gentleness, and flexibility, and carries the meaning of being a tyrant, an arrogant criminal who thinks of the rights of others as subservient to his, thus giving him the right to do what he wishes upon them.<sup>239</sup> When coupled with another negative trait, it typically pairs with words that carry negative - or even more so-aggressive, connotations such as *jabbāran anīdā* (an obstinate tyrant),<sup>240</sup> *jabbāran 'āṣiyyan* (a disobedient tyrant),<sup>241</sup> *jabbāran shaqiyyan* (wretched tyrant).<sup>242</sup> God mentioned in verse fourteen of *sūrah* Maryam that Prophet Yaḥyā, on the contrary, not in any way will be a person who is *jabbāran 'āṣiyyā*, a disobedient, rebellious tyrant. If he were like that, there would be a contradiction with his previous noble characteristics, such as being conscious of God and always dutiful to his parents.

The word '*āṣiyy*' actually comes from the *wazn* (the form of) *fa'ūl*, which is a *sighah mubālagha* (extreme hyperbole), a *ṣifah* (adjective) which carries an exaggerated meaning than the usual form *fā'il* (doer).<sup>243</sup> Therefore, the word '*āṣiyy*' the base form of which is *āṣīy* (disobedient), embeds a much more rebellious peculiarity, just as an '*alīm* (an extremely knowledgeable person) is more cognizant than an '*ālim* (a well-informed person).<sup>244</sup>

Being *jabbāran 'āṣiyyan* would consequently contradict the way righteous children should otherwise behave to their parents. In many verses, God mentions the treatment of parents with the word *iḥsān*, which means perfection and beauty in doing good, as is mentioned in verses twenty-three and twenty-four in *sūrah* al-Isrā'.<sup>245</sup>

In the two verses, God instructs us to speak to parents gently and with noble words and, lastly, to have an abundance of *rahmah* (translated as mercy in the above) towards them.

<sup>239</sup> Al-Rāzi, *Tafsīr al-Rāzī*, (<https://tafsir.app/alrazi/19/14>).

<sup>240</sup> Qur'ān 11:59 (وَإِسْتَفْتَحُوا وَخَابَ كُلُّ جَبَّارٍ عَنِيدٍ) 14:15 (وَأَسْتَفْتَحُوا وَخَابَ كُلُّ جَبَّارٍ عَنِيدٍ)

<sup>241</sup> Qur'ān 19:14 (وَوَيْرًا يَوْمَ الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ جَبَّارًا عَصِيًّا)

<sup>242</sup> Qur'ān 19:23 (وَوَيْرًا يَوْمَ الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْنِي جَبَّارًا شَقِيًّا)

<sup>243</sup> Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥit*, <https://tafsir.app/albahr-almuheet/19/14>.

<sup>244</sup> Al-Rāzi, *Tafsīr al-Rāzī*, (<https://tafsir.app/alrazi/19/14>).

<sup>245</sup> Translated as: *And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him, and to parents, good treatment. Whether one or both of them reach old age [while] with you, say not to them [so much as], uff, and do not repel them but speak to them a noble word. And lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy and say, "My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up [when I was] small.*

He also asks us to pray for *raḥmah* for them the way they have raised us, with an abundance of *al-raḥmah*. To be an obedient child in the eyes of God, a child must have these qualities, which contradict entirely possessing the aggressive traits of *jabbāran' aṣiyyā* or *jabbāran shaqiyyā*, or *jabbār 'anīd*. Therefore, Yaḥyā's features here more than comply with the characteristics and personalities of a righteous child in the eyes of God, which, as discussed earlier, is a source of abundant *raḥmah* for both parents.

### 3.1.5.6. Infinite *Salām* during Birth, Death, and at the Time of Resurrection.

In the last second closing verse about Yaḥyā, God ends with the attribute portrayed by the greeting *salām*, infinite peace as indicated by its indefinite form, during the three most crucial times of one's life,<sup>246</sup> the day he was born; *yauma wulida*, the day he will die; *yauma yamūtu*, and the day he will be raised alive; *yauma yub'athu ḥayyā*.

Ibn 'Aṭīyyā, as mentioned in tafsīr al-Ṭabarī, depicts that the three most horrifying days in the lives of human beings are the day of their birth, for God releases them from a familiar and safe place, the day of their death when they see the harsh reality of their conditions in the hereafter after coming out from living in this lower world (*dunya*). Worse yet, nobody can help them, and the day when they are resurrected to life again, they have to face the tremendous ordeal of the Day of Gathering (*yaum al-maḥshār*) and the Day of Resurrection (*yaum al-qiyāmah*).<sup>247</sup> Thus having been given the gift of peace in these three most difficult times, a person feels guaranteed security from God which others generally have to struggle throughout their lives to achieve and seldom succeed. This gift of peace is a special *raḥmah* God bestows upon Yaḥyā. Therefore, he must hold a special place in His eyes. Others have interpreted this verse as a *kināyah* for the complete life of Prophet Yaḥyā, that these three stages symbolize an entire life span, as was also thought out in another verse which states, "*salāmun 'alā Nūḥin fī al-'ālamīn*,"<sup>248</sup> where the term *fī al-'ālamīn* here acts as a *kināyah* symbolizing the continuity of the *salām* upon

<sup>246</sup> Qur'ān 19:15 "...*wa salāmun alaihi yawma wulida wa yawma yamūtu wa yawma yub'athu ḥayyā*."

<sup>247</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, <https://tafsir.app/tabari/19/15>.

<sup>248</sup> Qur'ān 37:79.

Prophet Nūḥ through his righteous progenies, including -but not limited to- the subsequent prophets.<sup>249</sup>

Besides being definite or indefinite, the word *salām* in the Qur'ān also comes either in the grammatical state of *marfū' or mansūb* projecting specific contextual meanings. In the case of the greeting for Yaḥyā, it comes *nākirah* and *marfū'*, with a particular purpose and weight which is significantly heavier than those in *ma'rifah* and *mansūb* form, as will be discussed next.

The *nākirah* type of *salām* is often seen in the verses of the Qur'ān when the greetings come directly from God or the angels addressing believers in Jannah to those who have endured patiently,<sup>250</sup> because of the good deeds which they used to do during their lives in this world,<sup>251</sup> as a welcoming greeting specifically for them at the entrance gate into heaven,<sup>252</sup> as an indication that they will be safe and secure in there,<sup>253</sup> and as the official greeting for and of the people in paradise.<sup>254</sup> More than this, God has used this form to salute those selected servants of God, His prophets, as depicted in nine verses in the Qur'ān.<sup>255</sup> It is also expressed in other categories, such as the greetings of believers upon hearing injurious speeches of others,<sup>256</sup> including that of Ibrāhīm to his polytheist father,<sup>257</sup> and the angels' greetings upon being sent to certain prophets of God.<sup>258</sup>

Morphologically, the word *salām* acts as an *ism maṣḍar* from the *maṣḍar taslīman*. In a sentence, however, its grammatical position and its definite or indefiniteness also determine its contextual meaning in the particular verse. When the word *salām* comes as *manṣūb* (accusative) and *nākirah* (indefinite), such as in verse sixty-nine in *sūrah* Hūd,<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Ibn Āshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/37/79>.

<sup>250</sup> Qur'ān 13:23.

<sup>251</sup> Qur'ān 16:32.

<sup>252</sup> Qur'ān 39:73.

<sup>253</sup> Qur'ān 15:46.

<sup>254</sup> Qur'ān 14:23, 7:46, 10:10.

<sup>255</sup> Qur'ān 27:59, 11:48, 37:79, 109, 120, 130, 181, 19:15, 56:91.

<sup>256</sup> Qur'ān 28:55.

<sup>257</sup> Qur'ān 19:25.

<sup>258</sup> Qur'ān 11:69, 51:25.

<sup>259</sup> See the underlined words in verse 69 of *sūrah* Hūd: "wa laqad jā'at rusulunā Ibrāhīma bi al-bushrā qālū salāman, qālā salāmun famā labitha an jā'a bi 'ijlin ḥanīdh."

(*salāman*), it acts as a *maf'ūl muṭlaq* (adverb) to the hidden verb *salamnā*. So the meaning becomes *salamnā salāman*, just as the word '*afwān*' from the sentence *afawnā afwān* or the word *ḍarban* in *ḍarabnā ḍarban*.

When the word *salām* is in the state of *marfū'*, however, it carries within it a more intricate meaning since it usually comes as a *mubtada'* (the subject) or *khabr muqaddam* (forefront predicate) or a *fā'il* (doer) for a *fi'il* (verb) in a sentence. Verse sixty-nine of *sūrah Hūd* carries both forms: one from the angels and the other from Ibrāhīm. Ibrāhīm's reply to the angels comes in as *nākirah* and *marfu'*. Ibn 'Āshūr considers this form and position of *salām* here similar to the response of Ya'qūb upon receiving the news about the disappearance of his son Yūsuf, *fasabrun jamīlun*, in the meaning of *fa (amrī) sabrun jamīlun, thus (my matter is) completely a beautiful patience*.<sup>260</sup> In the case of the reply of Ibrāhīm, as mentioned, there is a hidden *mubtada'*; *amrukum*. Thus the implied meaning becomes *amrukum salām*; your matter is (all) peace. Being independent of time and place carries a greater weight than when the same word comes in the state of *naṣab*. Consequently, it implies that Ibrāhīm was replying to the angels' greetings with a greeting carrying a much grandeur value and respect.

Another point to consider is that words originally came as indefinite. Later on, depending on the usage in a sentence and context, certain additions contribute to their transformations into definiteness, such as the *lām al-ta'rīf* at the beginning of the word. Our word *salām* demonstrates this issue, which comes in its original form as indefinite. Therefore, it covers a more general and vast meaning, enveloping all types of *salām*.

The above discussion also makes evident why some have considered the case of the *salām* uttered towards Yaḥyā by God himself as more complete and valuable when compared with the *salām* 'Īsā pronounces upon himself, one that is definite with a *lām al-ta'rīf*. The

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<sup>260</sup> See the underlined words in verse 18 of *sūrah Yūsuf*: *Wa jā'ū 'alā qamīshihī bi damīn kadhibīn. Qāla bal sawwalat lakum anfusukum amran fasabrun jamīlun wa Allāhu al-musta'ānu 'alā mā taṣīfūn.*

forthcoming verse in the same *sūrah* mentions this; *wa al-salām' alayya yauma wulidtu, wa yauma yamūtu, wa yauma yub'athu hayyā*.<sup>261</sup>

A short conclusion from the above brief discussion about the significance of God's *salām* towards Prophet Yaḥya is that the word *salām* here is similar to those greetings of *salām* God himself addresses towards His special servants depicted in the verses in *sūrah* al-*Ṣaffāt*.<sup>262</sup> When God greets with *salām*, it is an original *salām* that has no bound and is not dependent upon time and space, thus comes in *nākirah* and *marfu'*. Simultaneously, the *salām* God utters towards Prophet Yaḥyā also resembles those *salāms* in which either God or His angels greet the people of paradise or the greetings of *salām* which the people of paradise use amongst themselves. Like paradise, where peace is eternal, indefinite, and comprehensive, so are the greetings of *salām* used in it. Therefore, this signifies the position of Prophet Yaḥya in the sight of God and his deservingness of His personal divine *salām*. The act of God of bestowing Yaḥyā infinite peace during the three most challenging times in his life, if not throughout his life, is an act of great *raḥmah* as it carries the basic definition of being merciful, desiring good to the objects of *raḥmah*, wishing happiness to reach them, and carries a type of love which will diminish one's pain.<sup>263</sup> Being given infinite peace throughout one's life is a unique act of divine *al-raḥmah* as it distances the individual from the opposite of peace: agony, one of the characteristics of life in this world.

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<sup>261</sup> Muḥammad 'Ismā'il 'Atūk, "Sirr Tankīr Lafẓ al-Salām wa Ta'rīfihā", quran-m.com, Mawqī' I'jāz al-Qur'ān wa al-Sunnah, December 1, 2019, <https://quran-m.com/سر-تنكير-لفظ-السلام-وتعريفه/>.

<sup>262</sup> Verses in *sūrah* al-*Ṣaffāt* which carry the same form of *salām* as that upon Yaḥyā: "*Salāmun 'alā Ibrāhīm*", "*Salāmun 'alā Nūḥin fi al-'ālamīn*", "*salāmun 'alā Mūsā wa Hārūn*", "*salāmun 'alā Il Yāsin*", "*salāmun 'alā al-mursalīn*".

<sup>263</sup> Jamīl Ṣalībān, s.v. "الرحمة و الرأفة" in *al-Mu'jam al-Falṣafiy*, 1:611.

## 3.2. Manifestations of *al-Raḥmah* in the Story of Zakariyyā and Yaḥyā in Sūrah Āli - 'Imrān

### 3.2.1. Divine *al-Raḥmah* versus Divine *al-Iṣṭifā'*

The narrative accounts of Prophet Zakariyyā and Maryam in Āli' Imran are parts of the continuation of its thirty-third and thirty-fourth verses, where God mentions his particular preference for Prophet Ādam, Prophet Nūḥ, the family of Ibrāhīm, and the family of 'Imrān over the rest of the universe; *Inna Allāha iṣṭafā Ādama wa Nūḥan wa āla Ibrāhīma wa āla 'Imrāna 'alā al-'Ālamīn* (Indeed, Allah chose Adam and Noah and the family of Abraham and the family of 'Imran over the worlds),<sup>264</sup> *dhurriyyatan ba'ḍuhā min ba'ḍin wa Allāhu samī'un 'alīmun* (descendants, some of them from others, and Allah is Hearing and Knowing).<sup>265</sup> In this verse, the word *iṣṭafā* represents an act of choosing the *ṣafwah* (the purest and elite) of humanity.<sup>266</sup>

From these verses, the central theme of *al-iṣṭifā'* unfolds, starting with the preference of Prophet Ādam, prophet Nūḥ, the family of Prophet Ibrāhīm, and ends with the family of 'Imrān.<sup>267</sup> al-Biqā'ī (d. 885/1480) elaborates that each of them appears with a specialness that is interconnected.<sup>268</sup> God created Ādam from dust without any gender-related parents. He was also the first man representing humanity who could absorb and transfers knowledge to others. Moreover, he was the first whom God proudly introduced before the kingdom of angels. In his lions lie human generations. Then comes Nūḥ. He was the first prophet after Ādam who stood by the words of *al-tawḥīd*. Through him, God saved humankind and made them flourish once again after the horrendous storm that covered the earth and made its inhabitants vanish.<sup>269</sup> Next comes the family of Ibrāhīm, whose

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<sup>264</sup> Qur'an 3: 33.

<sup>265</sup> Qur'an 3: 34.

<sup>266</sup> Muhammad 'Abd al-Haqq Ibn 'Atīyyah, *Tafsīr al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz li ibn 'Atīyyah*, Al-Bāḥith al-Qur'ānī, al-Nuqāyah, accessed January 11, 2023, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-atiyah/3/33>.

<sup>267</sup> Qur'ān 3:33.

<sup>268</sup> al-Biqā'ī. *Naẓm al-Durar*, <https://tafsir.app/nathm-aldurar/3/33>, accessed October 2021.

<sup>269</sup> See Qur'ān 17:3 (*Dhurriyyata man ḥamalnā ma'a Nūḥ, innahu kāna 'abdan shakūrā*, "O descendants of those We carried [in the ship] with Noah. Indeed, he was a grateful servant.) and Qur'ān 36:41 (*wa āyatun lahum annā ḥamalnā dhurriyyatahum fī al-fulki al-mashhūn*. "And a sign for them is that We carried their forefathers in a laden ship.").

lineage bears at least two messengers of God: Ismā‘il and Ishāq, both conceived miraculously during old age. Through their lineage, God sent prophets of two major world religions, Muḥammad and ‘Īsā. Lastly, the family of ‘Imrān in whose lineage righteousness and prophethood also flourished, such as that of Musa and Hārūn, Zakariyyā and Yaḥyā, and especially Maryam and ‘Īsā. In its lineage, the unconventional way of the birth of a prophet from a virgin mother and without a father occurs, resembling that of Prophet Ādam.<sup>270</sup>

Another prominent theme in this part of the *sūrah* is that of *dhurriyyah*, of progenies. The word lexically carries the meaning of the verbal action *dharwan*, to spread particles.<sup>271</sup> Several verses of the Qur‘ān utilize this expression, such as *tadhrūhu riyāḥ* (the wind spreads it),<sup>272</sup> and *wa al-dhāriyāti dharwā* (By those [winds] scattering [dust] dispersing).<sup>273</sup> Hence the meaning of progenies or offspring suits to follow as they spread out through generations.

In this part of the *sūrah*, this particular word comes three times, first when God mentions that these people are indeed progenies to each other,<sup>274</sup> lineage links them. In the other two times, it appears in the prayer of Ḥannah, the mother of Maryam, and Zakariyyā. Ḥannah asked God to protect her child to be and the child's '*dhurriyah*' (progenies) from the influence of *shaiṭān*,<sup>275</sup> while Zakariyyā asks God only to gift him *dhurriyah ṭayyibah* (a good progeny).<sup>276</sup> The theme expresses the feelings of connectedness between these families of prophets both in lineage and of righteous works.<sup>277</sup> Ismā‘il, Ishāq, and Ya‘qūb, as well as their progenies, belong to the family of ‘Ibrāhīm, while ‘Ibrāhīm also connects by lineage to Nūh. Nūḥ and his righteous progenies came down from the ancestry of

<sup>270</sup> al-Biqā‘ī. *Naẓm al-Durar*, <https://tafsir.app/nathm-aldurar/3/33>.

<sup>271</sup> al-Aṣḥānī, s.v. “ذرو”, in *Al-Mufradāt*, <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#amr=236>.

<sup>272</sup> Qur‘ān 18:45.

<sup>273</sup> Qur‘ān 51:1.

<sup>274</sup> Qur‘ān 3:34 (“...dhurriyatan ba‘duhā min ba‘d...”).

<sup>275</sup> Qur‘ān 3:36 (“...wa innī u‘īduhā bika wa dhurriyatakā min al-shaiṭān al-rajīm...”).

<sup>276</sup> Qur‘ān 3:36 (“...Rabbī hablī min ladunka dhurriyatan ṭayyibah...”).

<sup>277</sup> al-Marāghī, *Tafsīr al-Marāghī*, 3:139.

Ādam. While the family of ‘Imrān: Mūsa, Hārūn, ‘Īsā, and Maryam are descendants of Ibrāhīm, Nūḥ, and Ādām.<sup>278</sup>

Here the attestation to this special relationship - the fact that Prophet Zakariyyā and Maryam were integral parts of this extraordinary family - begins with the story of Maryam's mother, Ḥannah, when she vowed to God to dedicate the child in her womb for his worship and His service in Bait al-Maqdis.<sup>279</sup>: *‘[Mention O Muhammad], When the wife of ‘Imrān said, "My Lord, indeed I have pledged to You what is in my womb consecrated [for Your service], so accept this from me. Indeed, You are the (all) Hearing, the (all) Knowing."’*<sup>280</sup>

The exclusive preference continues to be felt in verse thirty-seven, where God accepts Hannah's vow with a beautiful acceptance (*biqabūlin hasanin*), and He himself nurtured her in a suitable environment (*wa anbatahā nabātan hasanā*),<sup>281</sup> and by choosing Zakariyyā, Maryam's uncle from her mother's side, as her guardian (*wa kaffalahā Zakariyyā*). He frequently discovered unexpected provisions given directly by God to Maryam at the *miḥrāb*.<sup>282</sup> Upon this mind-boggling event, the story of Zakariyyā starts, indicated by the adverb of place and time, "*hunālika*,"<sup>283</sup> there upon, "*Hunālika da‘ā Zakariyyā rabbahu rabbī hab lī min ladunka dhurriyyatan ṭayyibatan, innaka sami‘u al-‘du‘ā*,"<sup>284</sup> (thereupon, Prophet Zakariyyā prayed for a child himself). This incident was like a breath of fresh air. Convinced by God's ability through witnessing the unprecedented event, right then and there, he asked for what many deemed un-viable, the birth of a child during advanced age and barrenness.<sup>285</sup> The preamble, body, and

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<sup>278</sup> al-Marāghī, *Tafsir al-Marāghī*, 3:140. Also look at supporting verses in *sūrah* al-An‘ām (6: 84-87) where God specifies the names of the prophets in the lineages of Ibrāhīm and Nūḥ and God's exceptional guidance and preference over them.

<sup>279</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-katheer/3/35>.

<sup>280</sup> Qur'an 3:35 (*Idh qālat imrātu ‘Imrāna rabbī nadhartu laka mā fī baṭnī muḥarraran fataqabbal minnī, innakā anta al-sami‘u al-‘alīmu*”).

<sup>281</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, <https://tafsir.app/tabari/3/37>.

<sup>282</sup> Qur'an 3:37.

<sup>283</sup> Abū Ḥayyān, *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, accessed January 25, 2021, <https://tafsir.app/albahr-almuheet/3/37>.

<sup>284</sup> Qur'an 3:38.

<sup>285</sup> Abū Ḥayyān, *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, accessed June 15, 2021, <https://tafsir.app/albahr-almuheet/19/4>.

conclusion of the prayer are all included in this one verse.<sup>286</sup> The adverb *hunālika*, the past tense verb *da'ā*, the conjunctive phrase *min ladunka*, the phrase *dhurriyyatan tayyibā*, and the attribute of Allah *al-Sami' al-'Alīm* all contribute to the overall feelings captured in this verse, in this particular prayer.

*Hunālika* depicts an adverb of time and place which denotes that the action was done right then and there.<sup>287</sup> In the case of Zakariyyā, this adverb indicates the urgency of his action, an immediate prayer upon witnessing the miracle God regularly bestowed upon Maryam. He believed that Maryam was a chosen servant of God through this special treatment. There was no question in his heart that the One who was able to give Maryam what humans deemed to be impossible,<sup>288</sup> surely can grant him "*dhurriyyah tayyibah*" despite his extremely old age and his wife's barrenness.<sup>289</sup> He thus also wished for special treatment from God, to be those whom God also chooses to bestow miracles upon. Hence in that sacred place and time, he supplicated.<sup>290</sup>

Verse thirty-eight of *sūrah Āli' Imrān* uses the verb 'da'ā' to indicate Zakariyyā's praying to God.<sup>291</sup> Generally, this word can carry multiple meanings, such as to plea, to call upon, and others.<sup>292</sup> In the subsequent verse, however, Zakariyyā commences his 'du'ā' with a calling to God as the *munādā* (the invoked one): *Rabbī*, my Lord.<sup>293</sup> This is a strong

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Some accounts, such as that of al-Karmānī, in the exegesis of this verse in *al-Bahr al-Muḥīt*, mention that Zakariyyā was 70 years old. Other narrations report that he was 75, 80, 85, 90, or 95 years of age. See <https://tafsir.app/albahr-almuheet/19/4> in the explanation of "قال رب اني وهن العظم مني" part of the verse.

<sup>286</sup> As we will see later, this differs from his prayer depicted in *surah Maryam*, where the whole prayer is portrayed more in-depth, in several verses instead.

<sup>287</sup> Abū Ḥayyān in *al-Bahr al-Muḥīt* elaborated on the differences of opinions regarding whether *hunālika* is both an adverb of time and an adverb of space. The more decisive view is that it includes both time and space.

<sup>288</sup> Abū Ḥayyān Athīr ad-Dīn al-Gharnāṭī, *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīt* [The Exegesis of The Deep Ocean], accessed June 15, 2021, <https://tafsir.app/albahr-almuheet/3/38>.

Al-Ṭabarī and Abū Ḥayyān, mention in their exegeses that Zakariyyā witnessed that Maryam always had off-season fruits available at her praying place (at the miḥrāb).

See Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīt*, <https://tafsir.app/albahr-almuheet/3/38> and al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, <https://tafsir.app/tabari/3/38>.

<sup>289</sup> Qur'an 3:37-38.

<sup>290</sup> Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīt*, accessed June 13, 2021, <https://tafsir.app/albahr-almuheet/3/38>.

Abū Ḥayyān mentions in his tafsīr that the sentence *hunālika da'ā* Zakariyyā indicates the aspiration of the servant to beg his Lord at that specific heavenly place and time.

<sup>291</sup> Qur'an 3:38.

<sup>292</sup> Ibn Manzūr. s.v. "دعا", in *Lisān al-'Arab*, 1385, <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#la=1385>.

<sup>293</sup> Qur'an 3:38.

indication, as mentioned in *Lisān al-‘Arab*, of the word 'da ‘ā' in the meaning of invoking God, as with this sign of calling, we ask of things we need from God, such as "Oh Allah, grant me wealth and children!" (*Allāhumma urzuqnī mālan wa waladā*) which also starts with a calling to God (*Allāhumma*) followed by words of request.<sup>294</sup>

He requests a righteous child here by using the phrase *min ladunka*, literally meaning from near you (God). It expresses Zakariyyā's wish to have a child who would be created without the regular human logic of actions and consequences (without *asbāb*). In a sense, he would be brought into existence as an expression of God's direct power and capability (*mahd qudrati Allah*), just as in the creation of Ādam and ʿĪsa, as well as the birth of Maryam from Hannah, who was also barren.<sup>295</sup> Zakariyyā's prayer also uses the word *dhurriyyah*, which expresses progeny. However, here it is used with the meaning of *ism jins* and not plural.<sup>296</sup> The extraordinary characteristic of this progeny is *ṭayyibah*, in the meaning, according to al-Alūsī (d. 1270/1854), as *mubārakah* or filled with abundant blessing, righteous, God-fearing, and pure.<sup>297</sup> Abū Ḥayyān (d. 745/1344), however, emphasizes that the word *ṭayyibah* adds extra meanings to the word *ṣālihah*, those who will be able to continue the stations and qualities of prophethood.<sup>298</sup> The prayer then closes with the praise to God, who answers all supplications, expressed in "*wa anta sami'u al-du'ā*."

In conclusion, the immediate prayer (indicated by the word *hunālika*) of Zakariyyā upon the miracle of Maryam, his plea for righteous progeny (*dhurriyyatan ṭayyiba*) directly selected and created by God (indicated by the phrase *min ladunka*) is accentuated, amplified. As noticed, the dominant vocabulary representing children here is *dhurriyyah*,

<sup>294</sup> Ibn Manzūr. s.v. "دعا", in *Lisān al-‘Arab*, 1385, <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#la=1385>.

<sup>295</sup> Abū Ḥayyān, *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīt*, accessed June 15 2021, 2021, <https://tafsir.app/albahr-almuheet/3/38>.

<sup>296</sup> Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Rāzī*, <https://tafsir.app/alrazi/3/38> and Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*,

<https://tafsir.app/tabari/3/38>. See also verse 5 of *sūrah* Maryam, where Zakariyyā uses the word *walī* instead of *dhurriyyah*, indicating singularity. However, Abū Ḥayyān in *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīt* mentions the opinion of Ibn' Aṭīyyah, who disagrees with al-Ṭabarī in that both words are *ism jins* which equally apply to both singular and plural.

<sup>297</sup> Al-Suddī opined on the last three meanings.

Abū al-Thana' Shihāb ad-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Ḥusaynī Al-Ālūsī, *Tafsīr al-Ālūsī*, Al-Bāḥith al-Qur'ānī, al-Nuqāyah, accessed January 14, 2023, <https://tafsir.app/alaloosi/3/38>.

<sup>298</sup> Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīt*, <https://tafsir.app/albahr-almuheet/3/38>.

and not *waliy*, as can be found in his narrative in *sūrah* Maryam. This wording is in line with the nuance which comes with this part of *sūrah* Āli ‘Imrān, the divine preference (*al-iṣṭifā’*) of a family of ‘Imrān over the rest of the worlds. This family is, in fact, a progeny of a long-standing line of prophets starting from Ādam, Nūh, and ‘Ibrāhīm. Therefore, Zakariyyā wants not only a miracle of a child despite his advanced years and his wife's barrenness, but he wishes for a continuous pure and righteous progeny after him whom God chooses Himself, *min ladunka dhurriyatan ṭayyibah*.

Thus, the overwhelming themes portrayed in this part of the *sūrah* are *not* that of *raḥmah*, nor the components and modalities of the process of the giving and acquiring of *al-raḥmah* such as those found in *sūrah* Maryam. There, Zakariyyā’s weak and destitute state, expressing the need for *raḥmah* from God, is portrayed in the preamble of his prayer as well as in the way his supplication was expressed (with the special *al-nidā’* instead of a general *al-du’ā’*). This *sūrah*, on the other hand, depicts a direct prayer of Zakariyyā without any preamble indicating a component of *al-raḥmah*, even though there is an affirmation at the end stating the ability of God to hear prayers.<sup>299</sup> Thus the style does not project the nuance of *al-raḥmah* as clearly here. But, albeit this, there certainly is *al-raḥmah* in the action of God's preference for one over another in the gifting of prophethood (*iṣṭafā’*) indirectly.<sup>300</sup> and God’s *hibah* (gifting) of a divine *dhurriyah ṭayyibah*.<sup>301</sup>

### 3.2.2. *Al-Raḥmah* in Yaḥyā: A Glad Tiding for Zakariyyā, a Chosen Prophet and Strong Supporter of ‘Īsā

It is pertinent to look back at Yaḥyā's personalities reflected in *sūrah* Maryam to appreciate those reflected by *sūrah* Āli ‘Imrān. *Sūrah* Maryam portrays Yaḥyā with striking characteristics that cover his life span, from the time he was a child to death. It starts with his introduction to Zakariyyā as a *ghulām*, as a young boy, and as the angel

<sup>299</sup> Qur’ān 3:38, “*Innaka Samī‘u al-du’ā’*”.

<sup>300</sup> ‘Umar al-‘Arbāwī, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd al-Musammā al-Takhallī ‘an al-Taqlīd wa al-Taḥallī bi al-Aṣl al-Mufīd*, al-Maktabah al-Shāmilah al-Ḥadīthah, 116, accessed June 10, 2022, <https://al-maktaba.org/book/32742/118#p2>.

<sup>301</sup> Muḥyi al-Dīn bin ‘Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikām* [Bezels of Wisdom] (Cairo: Dār Āfāq li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī’, 2016), 178.

brought glad tidings to him about the child. God then continued by expressing that the baby's name, Yaḥyā, is given by God directly, and no one else had ever gone by that name. This divine gesture is a great honor and love from God projected on the child. Then comes his character of adhering to God's book, the al-Ṭawrah,<sup>302</sup> and that he was given great wisdom since *ṣabiyy*, at a very tender age close to infancy. God also remarks about his divinely *ḥanān* (gentle and loving) personality, his purity, extreme God-consciousness, and devotion to his parents while never being stubborn or harsh. Lastly, God closes his portrayal as someone who will have infinite peace (*salām*) in his life, at birth, death, and at the time of resurrection.<sup>303</sup> Thus, these characteristics portray Yaḥyā as a righteous adult and individual while highlighting his persona as a child and son. In surah Āli 'Imrān on the other hand, the portrayal of Yaḥyā is contained in one verse with five distinct personalities which do not directly convey time and place, such as during childhood or adulthood: *muṣaddiqan bikalimatīn min Allāhi, confirming the 'kalimah' from God, sayyidan, ḥaṣūran, and nabiyyān min al-ṣāliḥīn.*

They are all reflected in God's answer to Zakariyyā's earlier prayer<sup>304</sup>: “*fa nādathu al-malāikatu wa huwa qā'imun yuṣallī fi al-mihrāb anna Allāha yubashiruka bi Yaḥyā muṣaddiqan bikalimatīn min Allāhi wa sayyidan wa ḥaṣūran wa nabiyyān min al-ṣāliḥīn*”. The verse clearly states the way the response was delivered and who delivered it (*fa nādathu al-malāikatu*), when and where it was delivered (*wa huwa qā'imun yuṣallī fi al-mihrāb*), and finally what the response was (indicated by the *maqūlah* after the *harf inna*).

By comparison, the response God gave Zakariyyā in *sūrah Maryam*<sup>305</sup> is different from *sūrah Āli 'Imrān*; Āli' Imrān points out that Allah was giving Zakariyyā the glad tidings of a child, who in this case was Prophet Yaḥyā, directly by his name, bi Yaḥyā. But on the other hand, in *sūrah Maryam*, verse nine uses the word 'ghulām,' which means a young

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<sup>302</sup> Reflected by the command from God himself: “*Yā Yaḥyā khudh al-kitāba bi quwwah!*”

<sup>303</sup> Qur'ān 19:7 and 19:12-15.

<sup>304</sup> Qur'ān 3:39, Translated as, "So the angels called him while he was standing in prayer in the chamber, 'Indeed, Allah gives you good tidings of John, confirming a word from Allah and [who will be] honorable, abstaining [from women], and a prophet from among the righteous.'"

<sup>305</sup> Qur'ān 19:9.

boy, to express the child. Only after this statement, God declares the name 'Yaḥyā,' "*bi ghulāmin ismuhu Yaḥyā....*"

A cursory look into the characteristics of Prophet Yaḥyā mentioned in verse thirty-nine of Ālī' Imrān gives us what seems to be the prevailing focus of this verse. As verses 33-62 of Ali' Imrān specifically seem to center their discussion around the distinctive preference of the family of 'Imrān (as mentioned in the previous sub-section), it also seems to be appropriate to mention '*muṣaddiqan bi kalimatīn min Allāhi*' as Prophet Yaḥyā first virtuous character. Most opinions have claimed the word '*kalimah*' here is indeed prophet' Īsa.<sup>306</sup> One meaning is that he will testify that his birth was truthful and that he is indeed a prophet of God and not His son. His characters of being a *sayyid*, a leader,<sup>307</sup> and an honorable person (*al-sharīf*), because of his worship and excellent knowledge, are also in sync with being one of God's selected 'ibād, servants, as he will carry God's will on earth honorably.<sup>308</sup> The word *ḥaṣūran*, someone who guards his chastity against women in particular, represents and connects tightly to the traits of some of the key personalities of these verses, namely the like of Sayyidah Maryam and Prophet' Īsa.<sup>309</sup> In his tafsīr of this verse, Ibn Kathīr concludes that the word *ḥaṣūran* here does not mean that he was not to marry and have children because of his complete disinterest towards women - as some have unfortunately claimed.<sup>310</sup> Instead, the meaning is that God protected him from approaching them<sup>311</sup> (in a manner which displeases God), the same way God guarded him against indecencies (*al-fawāhish*) and filth (*al-qādhūrāt*). Furthermore, a deeper look into

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<sup>306</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, <https://tafsir.app/tabari/3/39>. Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī confirms by majority opinion that the phrase 'kalimatun min Allāh' connotes 'Īsā bint Maryam. It also mentions a narration by Ibn 'Ābbas which states that while Yaḥyā was in the womb of his mother, his mother felt him prostrating to baby 'Īsā who was still in the womb of Maryam. This incident depicts the notion that Yaḥyā was the first person to believe and confirm the truthfulness of 'Īsā as a *kalimah* of God.

<sup>307</sup> Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, <https://tafsir.app/albahr-almuheet/3/39>. As also mentioned here, a quote from al-Zamakhsharī: "al-Sayyid huwa alladhī yasūdu qawmahu ayy: yafūquhā fī al-sharaf," al-Sayyid is the one who drives his people surpassing them in terms of honor and power.

<sup>308</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, <https://tafsir.app/tabari/3/39>. As mentioned by al-Ṭabarī in his tafsīr al-Sharīf fī al-'Ilm wa al-'Ibādah. He also mentions other meanings, such as the one who perseveres tremendously (*al-ḥalīm*).

<sup>309</sup> Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, <https://tafsir.app/albahr-almuheet/3/39>.

<sup>310</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-katheer/3/39>. See Tafsir Ibn Kathīr in the explanation of verse 3:39: in the discussion about the meaning of '*ḥaṣūran*.'

<sup>311</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-katheer/3/39>. As referred there a mention by al-Qāḍī 'Iyād in his book al-Shifā.'

the meaning of *al-ḥaṣūr* in *Lisān al-'Ārab* points us to that of constriction, as someone who constricts his palm from giving (*rajulun ḥaṣirun bi al-'aṭā'*), or as a camel whose ropes the owner has tightened (*al-ḍayqah al-ahālīl*).<sup>312</sup> Thus these definitions are consistent with the self-restraining properties that Yaḥya, as a prophet of God, must have possessed. God then closes his portrayal with his last character as a prophet and righteous person, *nabiyyan min al-ṣāliḥīn*.

Why the *sūrah* only relates these four essential qualities and not those found in *sūrah Maryam* is a legitimate exegetical question. Abū Ḥayyān, in his exegesis, analyzed the reasons being as connected to the very prayer uttered by Zakariyyā upon hearing Maryam's answer to his bewilderment of her un-seasonal provision directly from God. He precisely then asked for '*dhurriyyah ṭayyibah*,' good offspring. Why the word *dhurriyyah* and not *waliy* or *walad* or *ghulām*? And why the adjective *ṭayyibah*? Abū Ḥayyān, in his *al-Bahr al-Muhīt*, analyzed that the reason is that in Zakariyyā's heart grew the desire to have progenies the like of Maryam herself. Maryam deserved God's exclusive treatment, such as the off-season fruits as provisions. Someone who deserves this must have an honorable status in His eyes. Thus Yaḥyā was *muṣaddiqan bi kalimah min Allah*, just as Maryam was more than so by herself giving birth to 'Īsā. He was *sayyid* as Maryam was of her time,<sup>313</sup> and in *Jannah*, as mentioned by several prophetic narrations.<sup>314</sup> Yaḥyā, like Maryam, was extremely chaste, *ḥaṣūr*. No men had ever touched Maryam, nor did she have any desire for them. Lastly, Yaḥyā was a *nabī* and *min al-ṣāliḥīn*, as Maryam was,

<sup>312</sup> Ibn Manẓūr. s.v. "حصر", in *Lisān al-'Arab*, 896, <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#la=896>.

<sup>313</sup> Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, "Musnad Ahmad: Book 5: Musnad 'Alī Ibn Abi Talib. Hadith 1109," *sunnah.com*, accessed June 14, 2022, <https://sunnah.com/ahmad:1109>.

The relevant hadīth translated as: "It was narrated that 'Alī (رضي الله عنه) said: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: "The best woman of her time was Khadeejah and the best woman of her time was Maryam bint 'Imran. (رضي الله عنهما)".

<sup>314</sup> Abū 'Īsā Muḥammad ibn 'Īsā as-Sulamī aḍ-Ḍarīr al-Būghī Al-Tirmidhī, "Jami' at-Tirmidhi: What Has Been Related About the Virtue of Fatimah, May Allah Be Pleased with Her, Book 49: Chapters on Virtues," accessed June 14, 2002, <https://sunnah.com/tirmidhi:3873>. The hadīth translated as: "Narrated Umm Salamah: that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) called Fatimah on the Day of the Conquest (of Makkah) and he spoke to her, so she cried. Then he spoke to her, and she laughed. She said: "So when the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) died, I asked her about her crying and laughing. She said: "The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) told me that he will die, so I cried, then he told me that I was the master over all the women of the inhabitants of Paradise, except for Mariam, the daughter of 'Imran, so I laughed."

as some have opted, as the definition of being a prophet is one whom God communicates to give divine revelations in various ways as He wishes.<sup>315</sup>

Concluding from this analysis, these divine characteristics allude to similarities between righteous personas in the descent of 'Imrān, again, being chosen by God himself. Additionally, Yaḥyā's first character portrays him as the primary support to a sub-theme; that God created 'Īsā by the word (*kalimah*),<sup>316</sup> refuting the notion that he is the son of God. He was a prophet sent by God as the first confirming witness to the humanness of 'Īsā that he is simply His '*abd*'<sup>317</sup> and prophet. Other parts of the *sūrah* also narrate 'Īsā performing various miracles only by God's will.<sup>318</sup> While another part narrates his death, indicating his humanness again.<sup>319</sup> All this henceforth confirms the other sub-theme of this part of the *sūrah*; the humanness of 'Īsā. This sub-theme henceforth relates to and proves the central theme of the *sūrah*, the oneness of God, *al-tawḥīd*.<sup>320</sup> Thus, the overwhelming feelings and messages within Yaḥyā's narrative here are about the person of Yaḥyā being a part of God's *iṣṭafā* for prophethood within the House of 'Imrān and not that of divine *raḥmah* strictly speaking as is the case in his narratives found in *sūrah* Maryam.

### 3.2.3. Finding *al-Raḥmah* in the Relationship between Extreme Old Age, a Woman's Barrenness, and God's Ability to Create Progeny

Looking at Zakariyyā's reply in both *sūrah*, first in Āli 'Imrān verse forty: *Qāla rabbi annā yakūnu lī ghulāmun wa qad balaghaniya al-kibaru wa imraatī 'āqirun*. (He said, "My Lord, how will I have a boy when old age has reached me while my wife is barren?" The

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<sup>315</sup> Abū Ḥayyān, al-Baḥr al-Muḥīt, <https://tafsir.app/albahr-almuheet/3/39>.

<sup>316</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur'ān*, Vol.2, [no publication information], 61, accessed: October 31, 2021, [https://www.kalamullah.com/Books/InTheShadeOfTheQuranSayyidQutb/volume\\_2\\_surah\\_3.pdf](https://www.kalamullah.com/Books/InTheShadeOfTheQuranSayyidQutb/volume_2_surah_3.pdf).

<sup>317</sup> Muṣṭafā Muslim, and Najbah 'Ulamā' al-Tafsīr wa 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān. *Al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī li Suwar al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* [Thematic Based Exegesis for the Chapters of the Glorious Qur'ān], vol. 1, (Sharjah: Jāmi'ah al-Sharjah, 2010), 407, PDF.

<sup>318</sup> Qur'ān 3:49.

<sup>319</sup> Muṣṭafā Muslim, and Najbah 'Ulamā', *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*, 1:412.

<sup>320</sup> Qutb, *In the Shade of the Qur'ān*, 2:63 and Muṣṭafā Muslim and Nukhbah min al-'Ulamā', *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*, 1:407.

angel said, "Such is Allah; He does what He wills.") and then in *sūrah* Maryam verse eight; *Rabbi annā yakūnu lī ghulāmum wa kānat imraatī 'āqiran wa qad balaghtu min al-kibari 'itiyyā. (He said, "My Lord, how will I have a boy when my wife has been barren and I have reached extreme old age?")* the resemblance is imminent.

In both *sūrahs*, Zakariyyā expresses to God his amazement at God's answer to his prayer. Some consider these expressions to strengthen and re-affirm his certainty of the might and ability of God, that despite his very senior age, despite the barrenness of his wife, God will grant him a child. Can it, however, also represent an expression of disbelief as some have claimed based on the ism of *al-ta'ajjub* (astonishment) '*annā*' found at the beginning of the verse?

According to al-Rāzī, these expressions cannot be that of *al-ta'ajjub*, of surprise, as this indicates a deficiency in his belief that God is all capable of answering his prayer, which is considered *kufr* for the prophets and is an impossible trait to have. Another point is the fact that it was he himself who had asked God for a progeny. Thus it is more of an *al-isti'lām*; of inquisitiveness and assurance in what way their fertility will return to them, by the return of their youth or by a miracle given in their old age?<sup>321</sup> As verse 89 and 90 of *sūrah* al-Anbiyā' points this out, *wa Zakariyyā idh nādā rabbahu Rabbī lā tadharnī fardan wa anta khairu al-wārithīn.*<sup>322</sup>

It is eminent that in both verses, Zakariyyā mentions his wife's barrenness and his old age. However, looking into the two verses deeper, at least three distinct features which carry their own meanings based on context are also imminent in both. In *Āli' Imrān*, for example, Zakariyyā's tender old age is mentioned first, followed by his wife's barrenness. In Maryam, on the other hand, his wife's barrenness is mentioned first, while his aging condition is referred to last. Another major difference is who the doer (*al-fā'il*) is in the past tense verb 'balagha' in both verses. In *sūrah* *Āli' Imrān*, it is old age, *alkibr*, which is the doer of the verb, as if old age has followed him over time and finally reached him (*qad*

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<sup>321</sup> Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Rāzī*, <https://tafsir.app/alrazi/19/8>.

<sup>322</sup> Quran 21: 89-90.

*balaghaniya al-kibaru*). On the other hand, the verse in *sūrah* Maryam carries the verb's doer as Zakariyyā himself, expressed by *wa qad balaghtu min al-kibari 'itiyyā* (and I have reached extreme old age). Furthermore, verse 39 in *Āli* Imrān indicates the barrenness of the wife of Zakariyyā without the addition of the *fi'il kānat* as verse 8 in *sūrah* Maryam does. One opinion is that the *nāqiṣ* verb 'kānat' in *sūrah* Maryam comes as *al-ta'kīd* (emphasis), while another opined that it signifies Zakariyyā's wife's perpetual barrenness.<sup>323</sup> However, the fact that the phrase '*wa kānat imra'atī 'āqirā*' is repeated twice, first in his plea to God in verse five and verse eight, where Zakariyyā alludes that the main reason for his childless-ness is perpetual infertility in his wife's life.<sup>324</sup> This analysis is also primarily supported by the function of *fi'il kānat*, as discussed previously. However, the same narratives in *sūrah* *Āli* Imrān do not flutter this particular portrayal and nuance.

At this point, it is possible to conclude that both narrations display the components that prompt the descent of divine *al-rahmah* in these dire situations. However, *sūrah* Maryam profoundly highlights the notion of a woman's barrenness, just as in the narrative of Maryam herself in the same *sūrah*. Thus, later on, as a sign from God to this true gift, Zakariyyā was commanded to ask his people to perform *tasbīḥ* to Allāh<sup>325</sup>.

A similar sentence (bolded) in verse forty in *sūrah* *Āli* Imrān on the other hand: *Qāla rabbi annā yakūnu lī ghulāmun wa qad balaghanīya al-kibaru wa imraatī 'āqir, qāla kadhālika Allahu yaf'alu mā yashā'* (He said, "My Lord, how will I have a boy when I have reached old age, and my wife is barren?" He [the angel] said, "Such is Allah; He does what He wills.") gives precedence to Zakariyyā's old age over his wife's barrenness in his reasoning for his infertility. As the story unfolds, we later see that Allah commands him to perform praises to Allah, *dikhr*, and *tasbīḥ*, as a sign from God and not ordering him to ask people around them to do so, as told in *sūrah* Maryam.<sup>326</sup>

<sup>323</sup> <https://tafsir.app/baghawi/19/8> ,Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl.

<sup>324</sup> Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/19/8>. Ibn 'Āshūr opted that this particular phrase '*wa kānat imra'atī 'āqirā*' is a *ḥāl* (circumstantial clause) to the *al-yā' al-mutakallim* (first person possessive *yā*) in his question '*annā yakūnu lī ghulāmun...*'.

<sup>325</sup> Qur'ān 19:10-1.

<sup>326</sup> Qur'ān 3:41.

### 3.2.4. “It is Allāh Who Does Whatever He Wills”

The last parts of these proceeding verses in the two *sūrahs* then reflect the remaining conversation between God - through an angelic intermediary or otherwise<sup>327</sup> - and Prophet Zakariyyā:

- In *sūrah* Āli 'Imrān: قَالَ كَذَلِكَ اللَّهُ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَاءُ (*Qāla kadhālika Allāhu yaf'alu mā yashā*).<sup>328</sup>
- In *sūrah* Maryam: قَالَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ رَبُّكَ هُوَ عَلَيَّ هَيِّنٌ وَقَدْ خَلَقْتُكَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَمْ تَكُ شَيْئًا (*Qāla kadhālika qāla rabbuka huwa 'alayya hayyin wa qad khalaqtuka min qablu wa lam taku shai'ā*).<sup>329</sup>

The two responses are similar; in the sense that both carry the phrase "*Qāla kadhālika..*" [An angel] said, "Thus [it will be]."<sup>330</sup> However, one continues with Allah (*Qāla kadhālika Allāhu*), and the other continues with 'the statement of your lord' (*qāla kadhālika qāla Rabbuka*)<sup>331</sup> as the focus of the sentence.

There are, in fact, four major interpretations of the meanings of the word '*kadhālika*' in the two verses, namely:

- (1) It acts as a *ṣifah* to a *maṣdar* of a *fī'il* (an action) of God, i.e., like so will God perform his actions (that He will give you a young boy)<sup>332</sup>. In *sūrah* Āli' Imrān, the verse consequently carries a meaning: *He said, "Like so (will God perform his action), (It is) Allah who does whatever He wills,"* while in *sūrah* Maryam, the meaning becomes: *'He said, "Like so will God perform (His action). You Lord*

<sup>327</sup> i.e., The two opinions mentioned in the exegeses of the verses that reflect Zakariyyā's dialogue with the responder.

<sup>328</sup> Qur'ān 3:40. He [the angel] said, "Such is Allah; He does what He wills."

<sup>329</sup> Qur'ān 19:9 Translated as: 'An angel] said, "Thus [it will be]; your Lord says, 'It is easy for Me, for I created you before, while you were nothing.'"

<sup>330</sup> Translation by Saheeh International.

<sup>331</sup> [An angel] said, "Thus [it will be]; your Lord says, 'It is easy for Me, for I created you before, while you were nothing.'"

<sup>332</sup> Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muhīṭ*, <https://tafsir.app/albahr-almuheet/3/40>; Al-Ālūsī, *Tafsīr al-Ālūsī*, <https://tafsir.app/alaloosi/3/40>; Abu al-Su'ūd, *Irshād al-'Āql al-Salīm*, <https://tafsir.app/abu-alsuod/3/40>.

said, "(verily) it is easy for me (as) I had created you (also) before while you were nothing" '.

- (2) It represents the condition of Prophet Zakariyyā in his old age and the condition of the barrenness of his wife, Īshā', as mentioned by himself in the same verse.<sup>333</sup> With this in mind, the interpretation of the meaning of the verse in Ālī' Imrān becomes: 'He said, "Like so (thus let) your condition and your wife's (be the way it is). (However), it is Allah (who) does whatever he wills"'. In *sūrah* Maryam, on the other hand, the verse will carry the following interpretative meaning: 'He said, "Like so is your condition and your wife's. Your Lord said, "It is easy for me, (as) I had created you (also) before while you were nothing."'
- (3) The word *kadhālika* in the case of verse forty in *sūrah* Ālī' Imrān indicates the *sha'n*, the being of God, thus reflecting a meaning of *kadhālika* being a *khobar muqaddam* and the *ism al-Jalālah* 'Allah' a *mubtadā' muakkhar*.<sup>334</sup> Thus delivering the meaning of "Like so is the amazing being (condition of) Allāh, He does whatever he wills."<sup>335</sup> Ibn' Aṭīyyā, as mentioned in tafsīr al-Bahar al-Muḥīt of Abū Ḥayyān, states the meaning as "Like this amazing might and power thus is the might and power of God."<sup>336</sup>
- (4) In *sūrah* Maryam, the mentioned verse conveys a meaning which emphasizes the truthfulness of the word of God, thus "Like so is the statement of your Lord. There is no contradiction to whatever He claims to be". Therefore this also invalidates anyone who doubts this might of Him.<sup>337</sup>

These opinions highlight the main difference between the two replies even more. *Sūrah* Ālī' Imrān's depiction of the might of God to do anything He wishes (*Qāla kadhālika Allāhu yaf'alu mā yashā'*) starts with the name *Allāh* and not *Rabb* as mentioned in *sūrah* Maryam (*Qāla kadhālika qāla Rabbuka huwa 'alayya hayyin*). Thus it is His prerogative right and autonomy to choose whichever ways He pleases on the creation process,

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<sup>333</sup> Qur'ān 3:40, the first part of the verse.

<sup>334</sup> Abu al-Su'ūd, *Irshād al-'Aql al-Salīm*, <https://tafsir.app/abu-alsuod/3/40>.

<sup>335</sup> Al-Ālūsī, *Tafsīr al-Ālūsī*, <https://tafsir.app/alaloosi/3/40>.

<sup>336</sup> Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Bahr al-Muḥīt*, <https://tafsir.app/albahr-almuheet/3/40>.

<sup>337</sup> Al-Rāzī, *Mafātīh al-Ghaib*, <https://tafsir.app/alrazi/19/8>.

including that from an infertile womb and an extremely aged man.<sup>338</sup> Here, the āyah highly emphasizes the absolute right and might of Allāh and not that of His *raḥmah*.

In the *maqūlah* found in verse 8 in *sūrah* Maryam, instead of the word Allāh, the word *Rabbuka* is mentioned to signify God's function as the Lord of His servants such as Zakariyyā. In His *Rubūbiyyah*, in His capacity, as the Lord of every single thing created, He creates them from nothingness, plans, and manages their conditions,<sup>339</sup> just as in He created His slave Zakariyyā, He also created Zakariyyā's future son Yaḥyā between his wife's perpetual barrenness and his extreme old age. So the possibility is never beyond Him; it is *hayyin* (easy) for Him.<sup>340</sup> This character is a portion of His attribute as *al-Raḥmān* - the owner of *al-raḥmah*.

### 3.3. Manifestations of *al-Raḥmah* in the Narratives of Zakariyyā and Yaḥyā in *Sūrah al-Anbiyā'*

Looking back into and summarizing the narratives of Zakariyyā and Yaḥyā in *sūrah* Maryam, the following themes illuminate:

- (1) The characteristic of *al-raḥmah* of God by the overwhelmingness of the pouring of *ni'am* (blessings) over his creations.<sup>341</sup> The exaltation of God, Allāh, from ever having a child, from being a parent altogether. His capability is beyond parenthood, for He is the only creator from nothingness and the very creator of the parent-child relationship and its structure. He is beyond weakness and needs; unlike human beings, He does not have the urgency nor the desire to establish His perpetual existence like a person who experiences death, as He is everlasting in His essence and the only everlasting one in the universe.<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> Ibn Āshūr, *Al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/3/40>.

<sup>339</sup> As mentioned in the discussion on the meaning of the attribute of God *al-Raḥmān*, in al-Ghazālī's *The Ninety Nine Beautiful Names of God* ("Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad bin Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God. al-Maqṣad al-Asnā fi Sharḥ Asmā' Allāh al-Ḥusnā*, Trans. David B. Burrell and Nazih Daher, (Cambridge: Islamic Text Society, 2007), 54.).

<sup>340</sup> Muṣṭafā Muslim and Najbah 'Ulamā', *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*, 4:419.

<sup>341</sup> Al-Biqā'ī, *Naẓm al-Durar*, 12:156.

<sup>342</sup> Muṣṭafā Muslim, *Mabāhith fi al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī* (Damascus: Dār al-Qalam: 2000), 159.

- (2) How weak and needy are human beings as parents, both in the story of Maryam and Zakariyyā.<sup>343</sup>
- (3) The story of Maryam exhibits God's absolute power as a creator, as it depicts His ability to make something impossible in the human mind become more than just possible. Can a human being reproduce from the weakness of a female human, which men have never touched? Not just an ordinary person but one who can articulate and reason like an adult during infancy.<sup>344</sup>
- (4) Thus the initial point proves that God can never have a child and that Prophet' Īsā can never be His son, let alone the one God.
- (5) The *rahmah* shown to Zakariyyā is that of special *rahmah* for His servants; answering the call (prayer), granting help, and completing the request until He decidedly grants every wish.<sup>345</sup>

In comparison, the intents of *sūrah* al-Anbiyā' are pretty significantly different from those shown in *sūrah* Maryam. Many factors in the *sūrah* reflect this, including in the opening of the *sūrah* where God conveys "*iqtaraba li al-nāsi hisābuhum wa hum fī ghaflatin mu'riḍūn..*"<sup>346</sup> The *sūrah* emphasizes the reality of the hour and its closeness and how most people are still heedless from it, being busy and focusing on worldly life and matters. Thus the narratives of the prophets with specific incidents related to them in the same *sūrah* prove these themes' reality.<sup>347</sup>

God's messages through them appear consistent repeatedly as if they were a single community despite living in different periods.<sup>348</sup> The prophets are messengers sent by

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<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

<sup>344</sup> Quite astonishingly, the infant 'Īsā was also able to understand the sign language of his mother when she signals towards him in response to the shocking comments of his people upon seeing her carrying a freshly born child, '*fa ashārat ilaih.*' It then prompted him to start addressing the people. See page 216 and 217 in al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī bayna al-Nazariyyah wa al-Taṭbīq (Salāḥ 'Ābd al-Fattāḥ al-Khālidī, Ammān: Dār al-Nafā'is, 2012).

<sup>345</sup> Al-Biqā'ī, *Naẓm al-Durar*, 12:167.

<sup>346</sup> Qur'ān 21:1 (The reckoning of humankind is approaching while they are in heedlessness turning away.).

<sup>347</sup> Al-Biqā'ī, *Naẓm al-Durar*, 12: 378.

<sup>348</sup> Sayyid Quṭb, *In the Shade of the Qur'ān*, vol. 12 [no publication info], page 39, Kalamullah.com, accessed January 14, 2023, [https://www.kalamullah.com/Books/InTheShadeOfTheQuranSayyidQutb/volume\\_12\\_surahs\\_21-25.pdf](https://www.kalamullah.com/Books/InTheShadeOfTheQuranSayyidQutb/volume_12_surahs_21-25.pdf).

God to rectify the *aqīdah*<sup>349</sup> of humankind by establishing and strengthening His oneness and conveying the reality of life after death.<sup>350</sup> Here they are portrayed as the ultimate example of the best of humankind, where they confirm the oneness of God in every aspect of their lives, whether in difficulties or ease. They only hope from the One God and no others.<sup>351</sup>

Besides the themes mentioned above, these verses also carry repeated expressions to indicate specific strong nuances in their prophetic narratives. These include God's benevolence in granting guidance to His prophets, expressed by the repetitions of the words *ātaynā*<sup>352</sup> (we gave) and the words portraying knowledge, wisdom, and guidance which come with it, such as *al-furqān*<sup>353</sup> (the criterion), *al-ilm*<sup>354</sup> (the knowledge), *al-hikam*<sup>355</sup> (the wisdom), and *al-rushd*<sup>356</sup> (the specific guidance). The verses emit other nuances such as those of distress conditions and God's relief for his particular righteous slaves, signified by the words '*idh nādā*' (when he called), '*najjaynāhu*' (we saved him),<sup>357</sup> *istajabnā lahu* (we answered (his prayer)),<sup>358</sup> the words '*ābidin*' (worshippers),<sup>359</sup> and the phrase *ṣālihin* (who are righteous).<sup>360</sup> Correlating with all of these words,<sup>361</sup> it is evident that these strings of verses thus emphasize the bestowment of God's special *ni'am* (blessings) to his selected messengers. These blessings diversify into six types; guidance, rescue, answering the plea during distress, letting them into his special *rahmah*, and a special gift of a child as a sign for the whole world. The following discussion examines them more in detail to appreciate what kind of *al-rahmah* transcends in Zakariyyā's story here, where it ever is alluded.

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<sup>349</sup> Also often translated as 'basic belief' in religious practices.

<sup>350</sup> Muṣṭafā Muslim and Najbah 'Ulamā', *al-Taḥf al-Mawḍū'ī*, vol. 5:2.

<sup>351</sup> Muṣṭafā Muslim and Najbah 'Ulamā', *al-Taḥf al-Mawḍū'ī*, 5:65.

<sup>352</sup> See verses 21:48 (in the case of Mūsā and Hārūn), 51 (in the point of Ibrāhīm), 74 (in the case of Lūt), 79 (in the case of Dāwūd and Sulaymān), and 84 (in the case of Āyūb).

<sup>353</sup> See verse 21:48.

<sup>354</sup> See verses 21:74 and 79.

<sup>355</sup> See verses 21:74, 78, 79.

<sup>356</sup> See verse 21:51.

<sup>357</sup> See verses 21: 71, 74, 76, 88.

<sup>358</sup> See verses 21:76, 84, 88, 90.

<sup>359</sup> See verses 21: 53, 73, 84, and 106.

<sup>360</sup> See verses 21:72, 75, 86.

<sup>361</sup> Qur'ān 21:48-91.

The first *ni'mah*, signified by the verb '*ātaynā*,' the bestowment of guidance includes that of *al-furqān*, the criterion, light, and a reminder to Prophet Mūsā and his brother Hārūn,<sup>362</sup> and to Ibrāhīm *al-rushd*,<sup>363</sup> exceptional guidance and opening in dealing with his people who dedicate themselves to worshipping created idol statues. Also, God gave Lūṭ wisdom and knowledge to deal with his people who have crossed human limits as they perform shameful, immoral sexual acts.<sup>364</sup> Likewise, He also gave Sulaimān and Dāwūd wisdom and knowledge in the matter of two disputing parties,<sup>365</sup> and gave Sulaimān understanding of the matter to give the correct judgment,<sup>366</sup> while teaching Dāwūd the art of making outer garments that protect from severe harm.<sup>367</sup> Likewise, what God bestows upon Prophet Muḥammad is part of His divine inspiration and protection for His Messengers and as guidance for their people.<sup>368</sup>

In God's second mentioned *ni'mah*, His rescue, God manifests how He never left prophet Ibrāhīm alone in the tribulation his people subjected him to, such as when they lit fire upon his being<sup>369</sup>. He made the fire cool and rescued both him and his nephew Lūṭ from their harm by moving them to a blessed land<sup>370</sup>. In another verse, God also mentions His particular rescue for Lūṭ as a way out from the town where his people performed shameful sexual acts (*al-khabīthah*)<sup>371</sup>. The last verse in which the verb *najjaynā* (we saved or we rescued) comes is in the case where God rescues Nūḥ and his *ahl* (family) from *al-karb al- 'aẓīm* (great distress and agony).<sup>372</sup>

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<sup>362</sup> Qur'ān 21:48.

<sup>363</sup> Qur'ān 21:51.

<sup>364</sup> Qur'ān 21:71 (*wa najjaynāhu wa Lūṭan ilā al-arḍi allatī bāraknā fihā li al- 'ālamīn*). See also Ibn 'Atīyyah, *Tafsīr Muḥarrar al-Wajīz*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-atiyah/21/76>.

<sup>365</sup> Muḥammad Abu Zahrah, *Zahrah al-Tafsīr* [Splendor of Exegeses], vol. 9 (Naṣr City: Dār al-Fikr al- 'Arabī, 1987), 4900, accessed January 15, 2023,

<https://archive.org/details/FP60782/page/n5481/mode/2up>. It is said that the word *al- 'ilm* here refers to knowledge of prophethood, while the word *al-hukm* here refers to the wisdom and ability to understand matters from all directions. Thus it is also correct to say that this is the wisdom used to solve the dispute between the two parties in the matter of the ewes.

<sup>366</sup> Qur'ān 21:78 – 79; Al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Jāmi'*, <https://tafsir.app/qurtubi/21/78>.

<sup>367</sup> Qur'ān 21:80.

<sup>368</sup> al-Marāghī, *Tafsīr al-Marāghī*, 17:43 and Ibn 'Atīyyah, *Tafsīr Muḥarrar al-Wajīz*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-atiyah/21/76>.

<sup>369</sup> Qur'ān 21:61 (*yā nāru kūnī bardan wa salāman 'alā Ibrāhīm*)

<sup>370</sup> Qur'ān 21:71.

<sup>371</sup> Qur'ān 21:75 (*wa najjaynāhu min al-qaryati allatī kānat ta 'malu al-khabāith*)

<sup>372</sup> Qur'ān 21:76 (*fa najjaynāhu wa ahlahu min al-Karb al- 'aẓīm*, some opted to translate this as the great flood, while the literal meaning of *karb* according to Hans Wehr dictionary is agony, distress, or worry).

The next *ni'mah* is that God answers His prophets' call when they call upon him "*idh nādā..*". He responded to the call of Nūḥ when he was under great distress, Ayyūb when he expressed to Him that harm had overcome him,<sup>373</sup> when Prophet Yūnus (Dhu Nūn) beseeched Him from under many darknesses (inside the ocean, in the stomach of a whale),<sup>374</sup> and when Prophet Zakariyyā called out to Him not to leave him without an heir.<sup>375</sup> He heard the call of these prophets then, answered appropriately, and took them out of their distress. Furthermore, God mentioned for some of them the admittance into his special *raḥmah*, *wa adkhalnāhu fī raḥmatinā* in the case of Lūt, <sup>376</sup>and *wa adkhalnāhum fī raḥmatinā* for Dhu al-Kifli, Idris, and Ismāil.<sup>377</sup> Lastly, God mentioned his specific *ni'mah* for the one who guarded her chastity, that (despite this) God will gift her a son through an abnormal process of creation and make him a sign for the world.<sup>378</sup>

The above descriptions all relate indirectly to a previous verse where God points out that the Messenger of God, Muḥammad, is just like the other prophets whom God sent to humankind with divine inspiration delivered to him.<sup>379</sup> Thus, the mention of Zakariyyā here is also part of this message: God's overwhelming *qudrah* (power) and *raḥmah* upon His chosen prophets.

Based on the above discussions, the story of Prophet Zakariyyā within these verses concludes that it is one part of the overall theme projected within verses 48-91 of *sūrah al-Anbiyā'*. One topic concerns the reality of the hour and how most people are still heedless of it through their interactions with their messengers, such as those whom God called '*al-akhsarīn*' (the losers) who rejected and wanted to harm Prophet Ibrāhīm. God made the fire cool and safe upon Ibrāhīm, thereby projecting the uniqueness of God's might, ability, and oneness, and that only He can make hell fire safe for some on the day

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<sup>373</sup> Qur'ān 21:83 (*annī massaniya al-ḍurru wa anta arḥamu al-rāḥimin*) utilizes the word *ātaynāhu* to reflect God's gift of a new family for him.

<sup>374</sup> Qur'ān 21:87 (*lā ilāha illa anta subḥanaka innī kuntu min al-ẓālimīn*).

<sup>375</sup> Qur'ān 21:89 (*rabbī lā tadharnī fardan wa anta khairu al-wārithīn*).

<sup>376</sup> Qur'ān 21:75.

<sup>377</sup> Qur'ān 21:86

<sup>378</sup> Qur'ān 21:91.

<sup>379</sup> Qur'ān 21:45 (*Qul innamā undhirukum bi al-waḥyī*), see also al-Marāghī, *Tafsir al-Marāghī*, 17:41.

of Judgement.<sup>380</sup> Another theme depicts the messengers as role models and pillars of the establishment of the oneness of God (*al-tawhīd*). Lastly, it represents the theme of granting various guidance and aid as great blessings (*ni'am*) for this string of prophets, including Zakariyyā.

Concerning finding the nuance of *al-rahmah* in the case of Zakariyyā, one needs to reflect upon the above discussions and compare them with that of *sūrah* Maryam. The narrative of Zakariyyā in *al-Anbiyā'* comes only in one verse, where God says, "*wa Zakariyyā idh nādā rabbahu rabbi lā tadharnī fardan wa anta khairu al-wārithīn. Fa istajabnā lahū wa wahabnā lahu Yaḥyā wa aṣlahnā lahū zawjah.*"<sup>381</sup> First, it depicts the power and ability of God to resurrect the dead,<sup>382</sup> in this case in the meaning of "*wa aṣlahnā lahū zawjah,*" resuscitating the condition of Zakariyyā's wife's fertility. It also strikes an example of someone who believes that only the One God can answer his desperate need and, in this case, of a child, which would have been impossible had it been based on human sense and thought. Zakariyyā uses the attribute of God, '*khair al-wārithīn,*' the best of the inheritors, in asking God for a child in his highly advanced age and the barrenness of his also-aged wife. Thus, the verse projects Zakariyyā's firm, experiential *tawhīd* by hoping only towards the One God to fulfill his dire need and God's ability and power to resurrect humanity in the hereafter after their deaths.<sup>383</sup> Thus, the story of Zakariyyā acts as an integral part of a string of prophetic narratives confirming the key themes of this *sūrah*, such as the *qudrah* and *rahmah* of God, the establishment of his *tawhīd*, and His blessing (*ni'mah*) to him by answering his prayer (*al-istijāb li al-du'ā*). Although indeed the verse inherently contains a special *rahmah* of answering Zakariyyā's plead to not leave him in aloneness by granting him a child from his own loins, the verse does not convey the message of *al-rahmah* as its principal intent, unlike what is found in his narratives in *sūrah* Maryam. There, the story is much more detailed, elaborated in several verses, while projecting Zakariyyā's personality, pain and distress, and needs as a slave of God, aside

<sup>380</sup> Qur'ān 21:70 and *Al-Biqā'ī*, *Naẓm al-Durar*, 12:446.

<sup>381</sup> Qur'ān 21:89-90 (and Zakariyyā when he called upon his Lord, "My lord, please do not leave me alone by myself while you are the best of those who provide." So we answered him, gifted him Yaḥyā, and cured his wife.)

<sup>382</sup> Qur'ān 21:89.

<sup>383</sup> Qur'ān 21:89, *al- Naẓm al-Durar* Juz 12, page 448

from the modalities of how exactly God as a Rabb answers his prayer as His '*abd*'.<sup>384</sup> Thus the feeling of *al-rahmah* is more sensed and felt in *sūrah* Maryam.

### 3.4. Summary and Results

Other places in the Qur'ān also recount the stories that materialize in *sūrah* Maryam. Although each story in these scattered places seems similarly familiar, each scene offers specific themes that differ from the others, with additional lessons and messages to ponder. By noticing repetitions of the exact words throughout these groups of verses, differences between meanings<sup>385</sup> become more apparent as they interconnect with specific contexts in those relevant verses. This way, it becomes more evident that it is only in *sūrah* Maryam that *al-rahmah* occupies as one of its main themes.

Unlike in *sūrah* Maryam, the narrative about Zakariyyā and Yaḥyā in *sūrah* Āli 'Imrān does not start with any direct indication of *al-rahmah*, such as the explicit usage of the word *rahmah* or any of its possible synonyms. Instead, his story from beginning to end is only a part of the central theme of *al-iṣṭifā* of the family of 'Imrān. The words *iṣṭafā* (he preferred) and *dhurriyyah* (progeny) both are repeated three times throughout verses 3:33-59 shaping one of the sub-themes of this *sūrah*; God's unique selection and preference of the family of 'Imrān over the worlds. These scenes juxtapose the sub-theme in Zakariyyā's story in *sūrah* Maryam, that of *al-rahmah*. Between verses 1-53 of this *sūrah*, the word *rahmah* repeats four times, *rabb* seventeen times, '*abd*' (and its derivatives) eight times, *al-Rahman* sixteen times, and *hibah* (and its derivatives) five times, all of which shape the nuance of *al-rahmah* most appropriately.

His narrative in *sūrah* al-Anbiyā, although encountered only in two verses,<sup>386</sup> also depicts the surah's sub-themes, including the power and mercy of God, the establishment of his oneness (*al-tawḥīd*), and the many blessings endowed upon his prophets: guidance and

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<sup>384</sup> See Qur'ān 19:2 – 8.

<sup>385</sup> Meanings, in this sense, are when one wants to extract certain concepts from the verses.

<sup>386</sup> Qur'ān 21:89-90.

help in times of distress.<sup>387</sup> These themes, although they also allude to the *rahmah* of God indirectly (as the endowment of blessings is also a sign of *al-rahmah*), do not entail specificity and details concerning the concept or theme of *al-rahmah*, as his narrative in *sūrah* Maryam certainly does.

In conclusion, it is only in *sūrah* Maryam that the theme and nuance of *al-rahmah* are exposed strongly. Therefore, the following paragraphs will now offer a decisive discussion on how exactly the narrative of Zakariyyā and Yaḥyā in *sūrah* Maryam portray *al-rahmah*.

As discussed in the previous sections, different types of signs and contexts (*al-dalā'il*) within the text expands the understanding of the concept of *al-rahmah*. The first indication is the mentioning of the word *rahmah* itself at the beginning of the *sūrah*, expressed in a possessive construction (*al-idāfah*) with the phrase *rabbika* (your Lord) and its object 'abdahu (His slave).<sup>388</sup> This adverb, *idh* (when), implies the time and place of the occurrence of this *al-rahmah*.<sup>389</sup> This preamble to the prayer is then followed by the manifestations of Zakariyyā as a slave of God ('abd), as evident by his many expressions of *al-istirḥām*, the act of being weak and in need while asking of *al-rahmah*. This act is closed off by the action of *al-taraḥḥum*, of the bestowment of *al-rahmah* itself, by the owner of *al-rahmah*, God, as the Lord, *al-Rabb*. Finally, this *al-rahmah* manifests through the gifting (*al-hibah*) of Yaḥyā as a righteous and utmost devoted child, a prophet, to Zakariyyā at a time deemed impossible by the human mind.

The expressions of *al-rahmah* in this story fit the essential characteristics of *al-rahmah*, such as gentleness and ease (*al-riqqah* and *al-rifq*) and the intention to remove difficulties and pain from others. God's act of answering the prayer of Zakariyyā (*istijābah al-du'ā'*) confirms these characteristics in the word '*liyubashshiruka*' (giving happiness to someone by merry news) and '*hayyin*' (ease) in the words of the angel, and the divine characters of the child Yaḥyā. His unique name, which God grants himself, possesses an inherited

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<sup>387</sup> See section 3.3 in this study.

<sup>388</sup> Qur'ān 19:2 (Dhikru raḥmati rabbika 'abdahu Zakariyyā...).

<sup>389</sup> Qur'ān 19:3 (*idh nāda rabbahū nidā'an khafiyā...*).

meaning of 'life,' an epitome to *al-raḥmah*.<sup>390</sup> His loving persona, carrying gentleness which comes from God (*ḥanānan min ladunka*), his utmost devotion to his parents (*barran bi wāliḍayhi*), never being rude and stubborn (*wa lam yakun jabbāran shaqiyyā*) and having peace (*salām*) all strongly points towards the nuance of *al-raḥmah*, as these characters shape inner meanings of *al-raḥmah* in a child. Moreover, a righteous one, let alone a prophet of God, is a *raḥmah* to his parents as he brings them happiness and salvation in this temporal world and the hereafter.

Even more importantly, the story also portrays the most significant nature of *al-raḥmah* as the essence of God as *al-Raḥmān*, based on a theological point of view (*al-kalām*).<sup>391</sup> It manifests in God's will and action to create human beings and establish lineage and continuity of life through this particular act of creation by equipping them in the best possible way (*al-iḥsān*). Thus the connection to the famous prophetic saying (*al-hadīth*), which states that the name of the womb, *al-raḥim*, is derived from *al-Raḥmān*.<sup>392</sup>

Thus *al-raḥmah* has specific components, or players, which make its flow possible. In this particular story, these components externalize through a Lord who bestows the *al-raḥmah* (*al-Rabb*), the slaves (*al-'ibād*) who both implore and who are given *al-raḥmah* (*al-marhūmūn*), and the different characteristics and actions which they entail. Furthermore, as shown in the tables below, these players emit the last most crucial component; the nature of *al-raḥmah* itself.

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<sup>390</sup> Yaḥyā in Arabic means 'he lives' in the literal sense of the word.

<sup>391</sup> Al-Ghazalī, *The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God*, 52-54; Ibn `Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikām*, 178. These parts of these resources cover this theme.

<sup>392</sup> Abī Muḥammad `Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad ibn Ishāq al-Fākihi, Fawā'id Abī Muḥammad al-Fākihi, (Riyādh: Maktabah al-Rushd li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 1998), 473. The hadīth says, "Inna al-Raḥima shijnatun ākhidatun bi ḥijzati al-Raḥmān – tabaraka wa ta'ālā – yaṣilu man waṣalahā wa yaqṭa'u man qaṭa'ahā". This hadith means, "Indeed the womb is a branch which is taken from the loins of al-Raḥmān; He will connect whosoever connects (the blood relations) and cuts off the one who cuts (it) off." (Most translations usually only say, "The womb is derived from al-Raḥmān...").

**Table 3.1. Components of al-Raḥmah in the Story of Zakariyyā and Yaḥyā**

God as the Lord ( <i>al-Rabb</i> ) and as <i>al-Raḥmān</i> .	Zakariyyā as a slave of God ( <i>al-`abd</i> ) and the one who receives <i>al-raḥmah</i> ( <i>al-marḥūm</i> )
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Granting special <i>raḥmah</i> to His slaves (<i>`ibād</i>)<sup>393</sup></li> <li>2. He never disappoints in answering the requests of His slaves<sup>394</sup></li> <li>3. Presenting His gifts as He wishes, the way He desires.<sup>395</sup></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Acknowledges his weakness in front of his Rabb by calling Him in times of need.<sup>396</sup></li> <li>2. Calling God by the title, 'Rabbī,' my Lord.<sup>397</sup></li> <li>3. Caring and very concerned about who will continue God's mission after he is gone. Thus concerned with the conditions of the next generations, only for the sake of God.<sup>398</sup></li> <li>4. Obedient to His Rabb's commands (the example here is in the case of <i>samt</i>, not speaking to others as commanded by God except to inspire them to perform <i>tasbīḥ</i> of Him day and night).<sup>399</sup></li> </ol>

<sup>393</sup> Based on the word *raḥmah*, *rabb*, and *'abd* in this verse, '*dhikru raḥmati rabbika 'abdahu Zakariyyā...*' while *al-raḥmah* and *Rabb* are in the form of *muḍāf* and *muḍāf ilaih*; indicating that this is a *raḥmah* specific from the Lord, God himself (Qur'ān 19:2).

<sup>394</sup> Based on Qur'ān 19:4, where Zakariyyā says, "wa lam akun bi du`ā'ika rabbi shaqiyyā...."

<sup>395</sup> Despite Zakariyyā's agedness and his wife's barrenness, God gifted him with a child, '*huwa alayya hayyin*' (Qur'ān 19:9)

<sup>396</sup> Qur'ān 19:4. Based on this part of the verse, '*Rabbi innī wahana al-`aẓmu minnī wa iṣṭa`alā ra'su shaybā...*'

<sup>397</sup> Qur'an 19:4,8,10.

<sup>398</sup> Qur'ān 19:5. Based on this part of the verse, '*wa innī khiftu al-mawāliya min warā'ī.*'

<sup>399</sup> Qur'ān 19:11.

**Table 3.2. Manifestations of al-Raḥmah by God as (al-Rabb) in the Story of Zakariyyā and Yaḥyā**

<p align="center"><b>A.</b> Zakariyyā's need as the slave (<i>al-`abd</i>) and the one in need of <i>al-rahmah</i> (<i>al-marḥūm</i>)</p>	<p align="center"><b>B.</b> God's <i>rahmah</i> for the slave (Answering his supplication)</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Divine <i>walīy</i> (directly from God) in old age.<sup>400</sup></li> <li>2. One who will be within his kinship and the family of prophet Ya'qūb.<sup>401</sup></li> <li>3. This <i>walīy</i> to be pleasant, agreeable, and loving (<i>raḍīy</i>).<sup>402</sup></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. As a response to point '1' in column A :               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) A child whose name God chooses himself.<sup>403</sup></li> <li>b) Will firmly hold on to God's book.<sup>404</sup></li> <li>c) God grants him wisdom since boyhood.<sup>405</sup></li> <li>d) One who possesses divine gentleness (<i>ḥanān min ladunnā</i>).<sup>406</sup></li> <li>e) One who is God-fearing and oriented.<sup>407</sup></li> </ol> </li> <li>2. As a response to point '2' in column A :               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Hibah of a <i>ghulām</i>, albeit his golden age, downright adorned with divine characteristics, as a direct progeny of Zakariyyā'.<sup>408</sup></li> </ol> </li> <li>3. As a response to point '3' in column A :               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) One with <i>salām</i> (infinite peace) on the three most challenging days: day of birth, death, and resurrected.<sup>409</sup></li> <li>b) One who is <i>barr</i> (extremely devoted) to his parents.<sup>410</sup></li> <li>c) One who is never stubborn, disobeying, or arrogant.<sup>411</sup></li> </ol> </li> </ol>

<sup>400</sup> Qur'ān 19:5. "*Fahab lī min ladunka waliyyā...*"

<sup>401</sup> Qur'ān 19:6. "*Yarithunī wa yarithu min āli Ya'qūb...*"

<sup>402</sup> Qur'an 19:6. "*Wa lam yaj'al lahu min qablu samiyyā.*"

<sup>403</sup> Qur'ān 19:7.

<sup>404</sup> Qur'ān 19:12.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid.

<sup>406</sup> Qur'ān 19:13.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid.

<sup>408</sup> Qur'ān 19:7, "*Innā nubaṣṣiruka bi ghulāmin ismuhu Yaḥyā...*"

<sup>409</sup> Qur'ān 19:15.

<sup>410</sup> Qur'ān 19:14.

<sup>411</sup> Ibid.

**Table 3.3. Nature of al-Raḥmah by God as al-Rabb in the Narrative of Zakariyyā and Yaḥyā**

<b>Nature of Divine <i>al-Raḥmah</i> for Zakariyyā in Sūrah Maryam</b>
God expressing his <i>ṣifah</i> of <i>al-Raḥmān</i> : <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Answering a desperate prayer</li><li>2. Creating - in this case, without normal means</li><li>3. Equipping the <i>marḥūm</i> with necessities to live and more</li><li>4. Gifting of a creation that is embellished by God's <i>raḥmah</i>, benefitting himself, his parents, and humanity.</li></ol>

## CHAPTER IV

### A COMPARISON: AL-RAḤMAH IN THE NARRATIVE ACCOUNTS OF LADY MARYAM AND PROPHET 'ĪSĀ IN SŪRAH MARYAM AND SŪRAH 'ĀLI 'IMRĀN

Sūrah Āli 'Imrān starts with the narrative of the prayer of her mother, Hannah, of her great intention to dedicate the child to God's sake. It then includes the portrayal of the birth and upbringing of Maryam herself as one of God's chosen servants in the house of 'Imrān. The *sūrah* mentions God's preference for Maryam over the women in the universe and His act of purification strictly for her, making purity one of her permanent characteristics. The *sūrah* does not narrate the address of the infant 'Īsā to the people; however, it includes the detailed portrayal of his miraculous abilities as a prophet of God to the children of Isrā'īl. The *sūrah* then ends the narrative with 'Īsā's conversation with his disciples (*al-ḥawāriyyūn*) and God's statement about 'Īsā's claimed death.<sup>412</sup>

Sūrah Maryam, on the other hand, narrates Prophet' Īsa's detailed birth starting from his mother, Lady Maryam's seclusion and the angel's visit upon her to bring the glad tidings of his divinely miraculous birth. The *surah* also illustrates her process of labor quite replete with vivid emotions. It ends with the infant 'Īsā addressing the crowd, explaining his divine being and characteristics,<sup>413</sup> proclaiming both his mother's innocence and his prophethood and status as a slave of God ('abd Allāh).

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<sup>412</sup> Qur'ān 3:32-37, 42-55.

<sup>413</sup> Qur'ān 19:16-37.

## 4.1. *Al-Raḥmah* in the Narrative Accounts of Lady Maryam in *Sūrah Āli 'Imrān*

### 4.1.1. Brief Overview

As was the narrative of Prophets Zakariyyā and Yaḥyā, the narrative of Lady Maryam in this *sūrah* runs as a part of the elaboration of the special preference (*al-iṣṭifā'*) of the house of 'Imrān. As mentioned in the previous chapter, God says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ آدَمَ وَنُوحًا وَآلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَآلَ عِمْرَانَ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

“*Inna Allāha iṣṭafā Ādama wa Nūḥan wa Āla Ibrāhīma wa Āla 'Imrāna 'alā al-ālamīn*” (Indeed, Allah chose Adam and Noah and the family of Abraham and the family of 'Imrān over the worlds).<sup>414</sup>

ذُرِّيَّةً بَعْضُهَا مِن بَعْضٍ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

“*Dhurriyyatun ba`duhā min ba`di wa Allāhu samī'un `alīm*”

(Descendants, some of them from others. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing).<sup>415</sup>

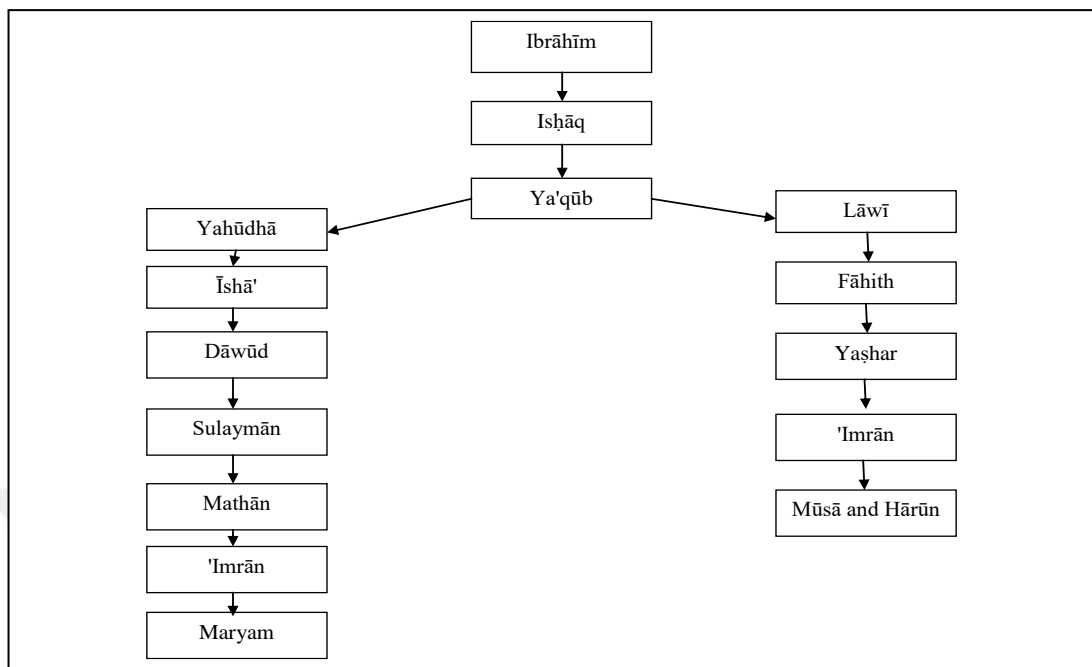
Who are these *Āli' Imrān*, the family of 'Imrān, whom God chooses over the worlds in this verse? Al-Zamakhsharī, in his *al-Kashshāf*, elaborates on two 'Imrāns from the genealogical tree of Prophet Ibrāhīm, namely 'Imrān the father of Mūsā and Hārūn, and 'Imrān, the father of Maryam. 'Imrān, the father of Maryam, came about 1800 years after the 'Imrān of the father of Mūsā and Hārūn. See the following family tree:<sup>416</sup>

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<sup>414</sup> Qur'ān 3:33.

<sup>415</sup> Qur'ān 3:34.

<sup>416</sup> Abu al-Qāsim Jār Allah Maḥmūd bin 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī al-Khawārazimī, *Tafsir al-Kashshāf 'an Haqā'iq al-Tanzīl wa 'Uyūn al-Aqāwīl fi Wujūh al-Ta'wīl*, [altafsir.com](http://altafsir.com), Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, <https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=2&tSoraNo=3&tAyahNo=33&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.



**Figure 4.1. Prophet Ibrāhīm's Family Tree Containing the Family of Imrān**

Therefore, from the two *'Imrāns* shown above, which one is relevant to our current discussion? Al-Zamakhsharī points towards the *kifālah*, the guardianship of prophet Zakariyyā mentioned in the subsequent verses, to answer this question. Zakariyyā, the son of Adhān and 'Imrān, the son of Mathān, lived in the same era, and Zakariyyā married the daughter of 'Imrān the son of Mathān, Ishā' the sister of Maryam. It is also known from a narration in Sahīh al-Bukhārī that Zakariyyā's future son, Yaḥya, is cousins with 'Īsā, the son of Maryam.<sup>417</sup> The Khāshīyyah of Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī relates a more in-depth discussion on this topic.<sup>418</sup> Thus it is 'Imrān the son of Mathān which God means in verse thirty-three.

<sup>417</sup> Ibid., Sahīh al-Bukhari 3430, Chapter 43: The Statement of Allah Ta'ala: "This is a mention of the mercy of your Lord to His slave Zakariya (Zachariah)," Book 60: Prophets, sunnah.com, accessed: October 26, 2021. <https://sunnah.com/bukhari:3430>.

<sup>418</sup> 'Aṣām al-Dīn Ismā'īl bin Muḥammad al-Hanafī al-Qunawī and Muṣliḥ al-Dīn Muṣṭafā bin Ibrāhīm al-Rūmī al-Ḥanafī, *Hāshīyyah al-Qūnawī 'alā al-Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī wa ma'ahu Hāshīyyah ibn al-Tamjīd*, vol. 6, ed. 'Abd Allāh Maḥmud Muḥammad 'Umar. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyyah, 2001). 110-112.

#### 4.1.2. Finding al-Raḥmah in Maryam's *Iṣṭifā'*

The narrative then continues with verse thirty-five where God narrates the mother of Maryam, Ḥannah bint Fāqūdh, and her sincere intention to dedicate her child to the service of God and freed from the responsibilities of this world (*muḥarrarā*):

إِذْ قَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ عِمْرَانَ رَبِّ إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِي بَطْنِي مُحَرَّرًا فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

'*idh qālat imra'atu 'Imrāna rabbi innī nadhartu laka mā fī baṭnī muḥarraran fataqabbal minnī, innaka anta al-samī'u al-'alīm*'.<sup>419</sup>

The adverb of time and place, '*idh*,' indicates the correlation between its *muḍāf ilaih* (the sentence which comes after the *idh*) and the verb *iṣṭafā* in verse thirty-three, God's particular preference of the House of 'Imrān over the worlds, especially why they are unique.<sup>420</sup> The vow of the mother of Maryam to dedicate her child to the service of God is the departure point of the prominence of the House of 'Imrān in terms of parturition.<sup>421</sup> All childbearing depicted in their narrations, including Maryam's, Yaḥyā's, and 'Īsa's, is unusual and miraculous. As also will be seen, their upbringing and personalities are also extraordinary. In Maryam's case, she is God's answer to Ḥannah's expectation of a God-serving righteous son. This remarkable lady's commitment and service to God surpasses that of any boy at that time, despite Ḥannah's presumptions and the then custom and belief: that a boy would have been much more helpful in the service of the temple, thus to God.<sup>422</sup> However, human knowledge is limited, while God is limitless. When Ḥannah took this vow, she forecasted for a boy in order to serve al-Bait al-Maqdis; at that time it was only

<sup>419</sup> Qur'ān 3:34 (“[Mention, O Muḥammad], when the wife of 'Imrān said, "My Lord, indeed I have pledged to You what is in my womb, consecrated [for Your service], so accept this from me. Indeed, You are the Hearing, the Knowing.”).

<sup>420</sup> al-Ṭabarī opined that the '*idh*' here connects to the attribute of God 'Samī' which comes in the previous verse along with 'Alīm.' This sequence of God's attributes means that God knows and hears the vow of Ḥannah for Maryam. Others opt *idh* to be *zāidah* (extra) or directly connects to the verb *iṣṭafā*, or as al-Ṭabarī opted, connects to Samī' 'Alīm with different interpretations in what precisely in this matter God is all-hearing and seeing (see Ṣiddīq Ḥasan Khān, *Faḥ al-Bayān li al-Qanūjī*, <https://tafsir.app/fath-albayan/3/35>).

<sup>421</sup> al-Biqā'ī, *Naẓm Al-Durar*, <https://tafsir.app/nathm-aldurar/3/35>, when he says, “ولما كان جل المقصود هنا (بيان الكرامات في آل عمران لا سيما في الولادة).

<sup>422</sup> Al-Biqā'ī, *Naẓm al-Durar*, <https://tafsir.app/nathm-aldurar/3/36>.

males that were able to serve there,<sup>423</sup> and women were prohibited from entering certain sections of the temple because of their menstruation periods.<sup>424</sup>

However, Maryam serves a much bigger purpose than this from the start of her upbringing by God himself.<sup>425</sup> God chose Maryam for His essential being, to be purified and raised above other women in the universe, and ordered her to perform certain worship rituals as a perfect slave of His<sup>426</sup>. The narration then continues illustrating an angel being sent to Maryam, first to convey the news that God has chosen her for Himself and prefers her overall women in the universe:

وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَاصْطَفَاكِ عَلَى نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ

'... *Yā Maryamu inna Allaha iṣṭafāki wa ṭahharaki wa iṣṭafāki 'ālā nisā' i al- 'ālamīn...*<sup>427</sup>, and that He has purified her, and to convey a command of worship

specifically for her:

يَا مَرْيَمُ اقْنُتِي لِرَبِّكِ وَاسْجُدِي وَارْكَعِي مَعَ الرَّاكِعِينَ

'*Yā Maryamu uqnuṭī li rabbiki wa usjudī wa irka'ī ma' a al-rāki'īn.*'<sup>428</sup>

#### 4.1.2.1. Detailed Analysis of the Verses According to Some Exegetes (Mufasssīrūn)

This section will detail the incidents where the angel visits Maryam to convey news from God.<sup>429</sup> Another section will perform a *comparative analysis between this same story in*

<sup>423</sup> Al-Qunawī and al-Ḥanafī, *Hāshīyah al-Qūnawī*, 6:113.

<sup>424</sup> Shaye J.D. Cohen, "Menstruants and the Sacred in Judaism and Christianity," in *Women's History and Ancient History*, ed. Sarah B. Pomeroy, (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 282, [http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469611167\\_pomeroy.15](http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5149/9781469611167_pomeroy.15).

<sup>425</sup> Qur'ān 3:35-37, (So her Lord accepted her with good acceptance and caused her to grow in a suitable manner and put her in the care of Zechariah. Every time Zechariah encountered her in the prayer chamber, he found provisions next to her. He said, "O Mary, from where is this [coming] to you?" She said, "It is from Allah. Indeed, Allah provides for whom He wills without account.").

<sup>426</sup> Qur'ān 3: 42-43 (And [mention] when the angels said, "O Mary, indeed Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of the worlds. O Mary, be devoutly obedient to your Lord and prostrate and bow with those who bow [in prayer]).

<sup>427</sup> Qur'ān 3:42 (And [mention] when the angels said, "O Mary, indeed Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of the worlds.)

<sup>428</sup> Qur'ān 3:43 (O Mary, be devoutly obedient to your Lord and prostrate and bow with those who bow [in prayer].").

<sup>429</sup> Starting from Qur'ān 3:42.

*this sūrah and sūrah Maryam.* This way, the analysis will prove that the main themes or nuances in the two sūrah are much different, despite both sūrah's similar portrayal of the granting of prophet' Īsā to Maryam.

The dialogue between Maryam and the angel starts with verse 42, where God says, '*wa idh qālat al-malāikatu yā Maryamu inna Allaha iṣṭafāki wa ṭahharaki wa iṣṭafāki 'alā nisā al-'ālamīn...*' while it informs us who the caller and bearer of the news to Maryam is, *al-malāikatu*. Here, the word '*iṣṭafā*' is repeated twice, at the beginning of the verse and the end of the verse, with the phrase '*alā al-'ālamīn*' added to the second one. As mentioned by many exegetes, the first *iṣṭafā* comes with the meaning that God has chosen her for himself and relates more towards the being of Maryam herself - the fact that she is an '*ābidah*, a special servant of God who is always in obedience to Him.<sup>430</sup> Her mother's *nadhīr* (the vow) during her pregnancy, where she would dedicate her child only to worship and serving God, supports this prophesied devotion.<sup>431</sup> Subsequently, in verse forty-three (as will be discussed soon), God commands her to be obedient and to prostrate and bow with the rest of the male worshippers in the temple,<sup>432</sup> indicating eminence as no other woman in the world has ever been specifically commanded directly by God to do so.

The angel says, conveying the command of God to her: *Yā Maryam, uqnutī li rabbiki wa usjudī wa irka'ī ma'ā al-rāki'īn*, O Mary, be devoutly obedient to your Lord and prostrate and bow with those who bow [in prayer]<sup>433</sup>. The *nidā'* 'oh Mary!' is repeated the second time, followed by the command to have *qunūt* (complete obedience) to God, prostrate, and bow with those who prostrate and bow. There are a few opinions concerning the meanings of '*uqnutī*,' '*usjudī*,' and '*irka'ī* .' However, in general, many consider '*usjudī*' and '*urku'ī*' as an indication for her to establish *al-ṣalah* with the congregation, as

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<sup>430</sup> Abu Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi'u al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl 'Āy al-Qur'ān*, altafsir.com, Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2021, Accessed: Oct 25 2021, <https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=1&tSoraNo=3&tAyahNo=42&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>431</sup> Qur'ān 3:35.

<sup>432</sup> Qur'ān 3:43, although al-Ṭabarī considers the *al-rukū'* and *al-sujūd* here as *al-khushū' lillāh wa al-ḥudū' lahu bi al-ṭā'ah wa al-'ubūdiyyah* (metaphorically meaning submission, focus, and dedication to the worship of God).

<sup>433</sup> Translation by Saheeh International (www.quran.com)

mentioned by Ibn Kathīr,<sup>434</sup> al-Rāzi,<sup>435</sup> and al-Zamakhsharī,<sup>436</sup> or in the meaning of obedience to perform worship to God as al-Ṭabarī seems to incline.<sup>437</sup> Thus it is depicted in another verse<sup>438</sup> the fact that upon hearing this, Maryam immediately prayed *al-ṣalah* until her feet swelled and became bloody,<sup>439</sup> showing her unshakable obedience and love towards her *Rabb*. At the same time, it is God himself who provides her with the nourishment she needs during this worship of hers.<sup>440</sup> Her provisions come directly from paradise, witnessed by her uncle, prophet Zakariyyā, who finds fruits that are not in their seasons near her.<sup>441</sup> All of these points relate to her being chosen by God specifically for Him, as depicted in the first *iṣṭāfā* in this verse.

The second *'iṣṭāfā*, however, carries God's preference towards Maryam over the rest of the women in the world. The exegeses of this part of the verse mention several *ahādīth*, including a *hadīth* narrated by al-Imām Aḥmad:<sup>442</sup> *Afdalu nisā'i ahli al-Jannati Khadījatun bint Khawailid wa Fāṭimatun bint Muḥammad wa Maryamu bint' Imrān wa Āsiyātun bint Muzāhimu imra'atu Fir'aun* (The best of women of the people of paradise is Khadījah, the daughter of Khawailid and Fāṭimah the daughter of Muḥammad and

<sup>434</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*,

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=7&tSoraNo=3&tAyahNo=43&tDisplay=yes&Page=2&Size=1&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>435</sup> Fakhr al-Dīn Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr Maḥfūṭ al-Ghaib* [The Keys to the Unseen], altafsir.com, Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2021, accessed November 2021, (<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=4&tSoraNo=3&tAyahNo=43&tDisplay=yes&Page=3&Size=1&LanguageId=1>).

<sup>436</sup> al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*,

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=2&tSoraNo=3&tAyahNo=43&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>

<sup>437</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*,

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=1&tSoraNo=3&tAyahNo=43&tDisplay=yes&Page=2&Size=1&LanguageId=1>

<sup>438</sup> Qur'ān 66:12, "...*wa kānat min al-Qānitīn*".

<sup>439</sup> Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr Maḥfūṭ al-Ghaib*, accessed: October 26, 2021,

(<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=4&tSoraNo=3&tAyahNo=43&tDisplay=yes&Page=3&Size=1&LanguageId=1>).

<sup>440</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī, *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf*, accessed October 26, 2021,

(<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=2&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=41&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>).

<sup>441</sup> al-Zamakhsharī, *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf*, Accessed October 26, 2021,

(<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=2&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=41&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>).

<sup>442</sup> Aḥmad bin Hanbal, *Musnad al-Imām Aḥmad, Bidāyatu Musnad 'Abdullāh bin 'Abbās, hadith number 2898, Vol. 1, 316, Islamweb.net, 2021,*

[https://islamweb.net/ar/library/index.php?page=bookcontents&flag=1&bk\\_no=6&ID=2751](https://islamweb.net/ar/library/index.php?page=bookcontents&flag=1&bk_no=6&ID=2751).

Maryam the daughter of ‘Imrān and Āsiyāh the daughter of Muzāhim, the wife of Fir’aun). Al-Ṭabrānī says: *Sayyidatu nisā’i ahli al-Jannah ba’da Maryama Fāṭimatun wa Khadījah* (The leaders of the women of paradise after Maryam are Fāṭimah and Khadījah).<sup>443</sup> Her status as a mother to a fatherless prophet was given to her directly without any acts or touch of men,<sup>444</sup> and his miraculous delivery molded Maryam's value much higher over other women considerably in the sight of God.<sup>445</sup> This incident is portrayed in verse forty-five:

إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَايِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنْهُ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ  
 “*idh qālat al-malā’ikatu yā Maryamu inna Allāha yubashiruka bi kalimatīn minhu ismuhu al-Masīh* ‘*Īsā ibnu Maryam wajīhan fī al-dunyā wa al-ākhirah wa mina al-muqarrabīn*”<sup>446</sup>.

The fact that the adverb of time and place 'idh' is again repeated in this verse indicates as if this is another separate occurrence where God portrays his act of *iṣṭifā* towards the family of 'Imrān. At the same time, sentences with 'idh' use it as a conjunction, just as it is being used to connect verse 32<sup>447</sup> to verse 35<sup>448</sup> and verse 35 to verse 42<sup>449</sup>. Before this verse, God expresses His *iṣṭifā*' by bringing Maryam into the world through her mother's prayer, expressed in verse 32. Then this same action of *iṣṭifā*' is expressed in verse 35, where God openly informs His *iṣṭifā* to Maryam. Thus it is only natural that in the next

<sup>443</sup> Majmu'ah min al-Mu'allifin, *Kitāb Al-Mawsū'ah al-Aqadiyyāh al-Duraru al-Sanīyyah, al-Maṭlab al-Thālith: Sayyidat Nisā' Ahl al-Jannah*, Al-'Aqīdah, Al-Maktabah Al-Shāmilah, 2020, <https://shamela.ws/book/38058/2118#p1>.

<sup>444</sup> Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr Maḥāṭib al-Ghaib*, accessed: Oct. 25, 2021, (<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=4&tSoraNo=3&tAyahNo=42&tDisplay=yes&Page=2&Size=1&LanguageId=1>).

<sup>445</sup> Al-Ālūsī, *Tafsīr al-Ālūsī*, <https://tafsir.app/alaloosi/3/42>.

<sup>446</sup> Translated as: [And mention] when the angels said, "O Mary, indeed Allah gives you good tidings of a word from Him, whose name will be the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary - distinguished in this world and the Hereafter and among those brought near [to Allah].

<sup>447</sup> Qur'ān 3:32 (ذُرِّيَّةً بَعْضُهَا مِنْ بَعْضٍ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَىٰ آدَمَ وَنُوحًا وَآلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَآلَ عِمْرَانَ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ)

<sup>448</sup> Qur'ān 3:35 (إِذْ قَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ عِمْرَانَ رَبِّ إِنِّي نَدَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِي بَطْنِي مُحَرَّرًا فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ). As also mentioned in a prophetic narration about the virtue of prophet 'Īsā, that “Abu Huraira reported Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) as saying: The satan touches every son of Adam on the day when his mother gives birth to him with the exception of Mary and her son.” See Abū al-Ḥusayn 'Asākir ad-Dīn Muslim, “Sahih Muslim: The Book of Virtues: The Virtues of 'Īsā, Peace Be Upon Him: Hadith 2366c,” Sunnah.com, accessed January 14, 2023, <https://sunnah.com/muslim:2366c>.

<sup>449</sup> Qur'ān 3:42 (وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَايِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَاصْطَفَاكِ عَلَىٰ نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ)

verse also comes the *iṣṭifā'* of Maryam's son, expressed as God's glad tidings to Maryam of "a son whose name is *al-Masīh 'Īsā ibn Maryam*."<sup>450</sup>

Regardless of the differences of opinions between the exegetes in regards to what governs this '*idh*,' whether it connects directly to the first '*idh*' in verse 32, as a *badal* towards God's *iṣṭifā'* for the family of 'Imrān, or as a *badal* towards the verb *yakhtaṣimūna* in verse 44,<sup>451</sup> or towards the *idh qālat al-malāikatu* narrating the *iṣṭifā'* of Maryam in verse forty-two, or simply as an '*atf*' towards it, the verse still depicts the special preference (*iṣṭifā'*) of God of both Maryam as the mother of a particular fatherless prophet '*Īsa al-Masīh* and towards the son himself. In that particular verse, God relates the news with the verb *yubashiruka*, indicating that the news is a merry one, which portrays him as '*kalimah*' from God himself, with the *ṣifah 'wajihān'* in this world and the next, and decrees that he would be amongst those who are in extreme proximity towards Him (*al-muqarrabīn*). Another section in the discourse concerning verses relating the narratives of prophet '*Īsā al-Masīh* will dive into this aspect further.

As a deduction, a dominant atmosphere of the concept of *istifā'* (particular preference) is witnessed throughout the narratives above, first in verse forty-two, where the word *iṣṭafāki* is repeated twice, and later in the subsequent verses concerning Maryam and 'Īsā. God expresses His concept of *al-iṣṭifā'* by choosing some of His slaves for His message as prophets. This theme is replete in the Qur'ān as can be seen in the following few verses, the first one being from *sūrah Ṣād*:<sup>452</sup> *wa innahum 'indanā lamin al-muṣṭafāin al-akhyār* (And indeed they are, to Us, among the chosen and outstanding). Here, a derivative of the maṣdar *al-iṣṭifā'* is used, *al-muṣṭafāin*, those who are chosen. Al-Rāzi elaborates that this

<sup>450</sup> Qur'ān 3:45 (إذ قالت الملائكة يا مريم إن الله يبشرك بكلمة منه)

<sup>451</sup> Al-Rāzi, *Tafsīr al-Rāzi*, <https://tafsir.app/alrazi/3/45>.

According to some exegetes, as mentioned by Abu Hayyān al Andalusī, in Al-Bahr al-Muḥīṭ, this opinion is weak. In order for one to be a *badal* (replacement) of another, they need to happen at the same time or close in time. In contrast, it is only comprehensible if the glad tidings of 'Īsā comes when Maryam has reached a certain mature age where she consequently can understand and converse with the angel maturely and logically. Nevertheless, the dispute amongst the people regarding who should be Maryam's guardian occurred when she was still underage. A vast time difference makes verse 45 far off when considered a *badal* (substitute) for verse 44, where the verb '*yakhtaṣimūna*' can be found. Hence, it is more suitable, according to some, such as al-Rāzi, to consider verse forty-five as '*ātf*' (conjunction) to verse forty-two.

<sup>452</sup> Qur'ān 38:46-48.

verse directs toward the prophets, specifically chosen to be protected by God, body, and soul.<sup>453</sup>

Another usage in *sūrah* al-Naml verse fifty-nine, where God says: *Qul al-ḥamdu lillāhi wa salāmun 'alā 'ibādihi alladhīna iṣṭafā* (Say, [O Muḥammad], "Praise be to Allah, and peace upon His servants whom He has chosen. Is Allah better or what they associate with Him?")<sup>454</sup>. The word *alladhīna iṣṭafā* here, according to Ibn Kathīr, is also directed towards the prophets or the companions of prophet Muḥammad.<sup>455</sup>

In *sūrah* al-A'rāf, God chooses and prefers Musā to receive his message and words, where al-Qurṭubī mentions the word '*alā al-Nās*, over the people, here means that Mūsa is sent to the people (as a messenger of God): *Qāla yā Mūsā innī iṣṭafāytuka 'alā al-nāsi bi-risālatī wa bi kalāmī fa khudh mā ātaytuka wa kun mina al-shākirīn* ([Allah] said, "O Moses, I have chosen you over the people with My messages and My words [to you]. So take what I have given you and be among the grateful.")<sup>456</sup>.

Thus a pertinent question arises; what is then the relationship between the concept of *al-rahmah* and the concept of *al-iṣṭifā*? Fortunately, this is elaborated by Ibn 'Āshūr in his interpretation of verse thirty-two of *sūrah* al-Zukhruf:

أَهُمْ يَقْسِمُونَ رَحْمَتَ رَبِّكَ ۗ نَحْنُ قَسَمْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ مَعِيشَتَهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۗ وَرَفَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِيَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُهُمْ بَعْضًا سُلْخِيًّا ۗ وَرَحْمَتُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ مِّمَّا يَجْمَعُونَ

<sup>453</sup> Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr Maḥāṭib al-Ghaib*, accessed January 14, 2023,

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=4&tSoraNo=38&tAyahNo=47&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>454</sup> Qur'ān 27:59.

<sup>455</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, accessed November 2021,

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=7&tSoraNo=27&tAyahNo=59&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>

<sup>456</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān*, altafsir.com, Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2021,

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=5&tSoraNo=7&tAyahNo=144&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.

*'A hum yuqsimūna raḥmata rabbika? Naḥnu qasamnā bainahum ma 'īshatahum fī al-hayāti al-dunyā. Wa rafa 'nā ba 'dahum fawqa ba 'dīn darajātin liyattakhidha ba 'duhum ba 'dan sukhriyyan. Wa raḥmatu rabbika khayrun mimmā yajma 'ūn'.<sup>457</sup>*

Ibn' Āshūr discusses the atrocity of the disbelievers who did not believe that only God himself chooses and prefers one over others, as He is also the One who chooses who deserves prophethood, the only one who can distribute provisions and *ni'mah* amongst his creatures.<sup>458</sup> Thus being chosen by God for His sake is His act of divine *al-raḥmah* for whomever He wills. God certainly shows a similar case for His *iṣṭifā* over Maryam.

Albeit this, with a cursory look into the above narratives about Maryam in Āli 'Imrān, it is clear that they strongly project a nuance of God's preference over some of his slaves, the nuance of *al-iṣṭifā'*, more than that of His divine *raḥmah* over them. With this *al-iṣṭifā'*, God accepts Hannāh's vow, raises Maryam Himself, provides her with sustenance directly from Him, and chooses her to be the only female to whom an angel messenger is sent. God chooses her for Himself above all women in the universe, purifying her so that she maintains immaculacy throughout her life and commands her exclusively certain worship undertakings. She was also to carry in her womb a great prophet in the making without the regular route of consummation. Although all of these acts show the divine *al-raḥmah* for Maryam, the overwhelming indication projected from the narrations of Maryam from these verses is that of God's special *al-iṣṭifā'* for her over others, especially with the display of the very word itself in at least three places.<sup>459</sup>

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<sup>457</sup> Qur'ān 43:32. Translated as: (Do they distribute the raḥmah of your Lord? It is We who have apportioned among them their livelihood in the life of this world and have raised some of them above others in degrees [of rank] that they may make use of one another for service. However, the mercy of your Lord is better than whatever they accumulate.).

<sup>458</sup> Ibn 'Āshūr, *Tafsīr al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, altafsir.com, Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2021, <https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=54&tSoraNo=43&tAyahNo=32&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>459</sup> Qur'ān 3:33 and 3:42.

## 4.2. Manifestation of *al-Raḥmah* in the Narratives of Maryam in *Sūrah Maryam*

### 4.2.1. Maryam as an Amah of God Deserving His *Raḥmah*

Here the story of Maryam starts off with the first '*wa udhkur*' out of the 6 times it occurs throughout this *sūrah*:

وَأذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَرْيَمَ إِذِ اتَّيَدَّتْ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا مَكَانًا شَرْقِيًّا

*wa udhkur fi al-kitābi Maryama idhi intabadhat min ahlihā makānān sharqiyyā.*<sup>460</sup>

It begins with an '*amr*' from God to prophet Muḥammad to mention her in 'the book' as a *ma'tūf* (continuation) of the 2nd verse where God commanded the mentioning of the *raḥmah* for Zakariyyā.<sup>461</sup> The story started when Maryam secluded herself from her family and people. The verse employs the verb '*intabadhat*,' meaning *nabidhat* or *ṭarahat* in the literal sense of the word, to fling or remove something away. This meaning connotes her complete seclusion from her family by 'throwing' or 'removing' herself away from them. She then went to an eastern place. Some speculate that this place is towards the sunrise, not sunset.<sup>462</sup>

According to Ibn `Āshūr, this verse is *ma'tūf* upon the second verse of the *sūrah*, the mention of the *raḥmah* of God towards Zakariyyā.<sup>463</sup> Even though the form of the two sentences are different, one being *khbariyyah* (starting with a *maṣḍar dhikru*), while the other *inshā'iyyah* (starting with a command verb *udhkur*), they both carry the same meaning because the *maṣḍar dhikru* in the start of the second verse acts as the command, "mention!".

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<sup>460</sup> And mention, [O Muḥammad], in the Book [the story of] Mary, when she withdrew from her family to a place toward the east. (Qur'ān 19:16, Translation by Saheeh International)

<sup>461</sup> Qur'ān 19:2.

<sup>462</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*,

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=1&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=16&tDisplay=yes&Page=1&Size=1&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>463</sup> Ibn `Āshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/19/16>.

Why does *fī al-kitāb* follow this verb? Ibn 'Āshūr's view, in this case, is that *al-kitāb* serves as proof that these stories of the prophets are not make-believe stories and that they need to be preserved in the *kitāb*, in this case, the Qur'ān as the ultimate truth, and not anywhere else. It also indicates that this true story about a virgin-birthed prophet is not a tale that Prophet Muḥammad fabricated.<sup>464</sup>

The story starts with Maryam secluding herself in an eastern place from her family. Thus the word *intabathat* follows the adverb of time, 'idh,' meaning: go mention in the book (this particular story of) Maryam *idh*, when she took complete seclusion from her family in an eastern place.' If in the story of prophet Zakariyyā, the narrative starts with *idh nādā rabbahu nidā'an khaḥfiyyā*, when he called out towards His Rabb for a very desperate need of his, the story of Maryam begins with the very act of secluding oneself from people.<sup>465</sup> Hence this time, Maryam's narrative highlights this action as a starting point of what was about to come to her. Her *intibādh* is the opening gate towards what God is about to bestow on her,<sup>466</sup> as is the same case for the *nidā* of prophet Zakariyyā as the very gate which opens God's special *raḥmah* towards him<sup>467</sup>.

#### 4.2.2. God's Special *Raḥmah* for the One Who Secluded Herself

The narrative of Maryam al-Batūl<sup>468</sup> continues with verse seventeen, Maryam completely isolates herself from her family and the rest of the people with a hijab, *fantabadhat min*

<sup>464</sup> Ibn 'Āshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/19/16>.

<sup>465</sup> Abū Su'ūd bin Muḥammad Al-'Āmādī, *Irshād al-'Aql al-Salīm ilā Mazāyā al-Kitāb al-Karīm* [The Guide of the Sound Mind towards the Virtues of the Honorable Book], vol. 3, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Āṭā (Riyāḍ: Maktabah al-Riyāḍ al-Ḥadīthah), 574, accessed: January 10, 2023, [https://archive.org/details/Tafsir\\_Abu\\_Suoud/3/](https://archive.org/details/Tafsir_Abu_Suoud/3/).

<sup>466</sup> Muṣṭafā Muslim and Najbah 'Ulamā', *al-Taḥfīr al-Mawḍū'ī*, 4:429. Al-Qāsimī, in his tafsīr *al-Maḥāsīn al-Ta'wīl* (mentioned in *al-Taḥfīr al-Mawḍū'ī li suwar al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*), states that the purpose of the hijāb in the subsequent verse is in order for her to receive the light of revelation from God.

<sup>467</sup> Despite the various opinions mentioned about the possible reasons Maryam had to seclude herself from her family, including excusing herself because of menstruation and taking a bath to clean herself or to comb her hair (as mentioned by Ibn 'Āshūr and al-Rāzī, amongst other mufasssīrīn), whatever the reason might have been, it must have significant merit for God to choose it as the opening event for the many subsequent miraculous occurrences God bestows upon her and his soon to be son, prophet 'Īsā.

<sup>468</sup> Al-Qunawī and al-Ḥanafī, *Hāshīyah al-Qunawī*, 6:112.

*dūnihim hijābān fa arsalnā ilaihā rūhanā fatamaththala lahā basharan sawiyyā*<sup>469</sup>. Al-Suddī opines that the word *hijāb* in the verse means a wall, while Ibn ‘Abbās inclines towards the meaning of a place in the east where shadows protect Maryam from the sun.<sup>470</sup> Al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058), on the other hand, considers three different possibilities in the meaning of this verse and inclines towards Maryam taking a '*hijāb*' from people to focus upon worship. According to him, there are two opinions in this case, the first being a place where she secludes herself for worship, while the second is for retreating from others within her days of menstruation.<sup>471</sup>

Maryam was an *amah*.<sup>472</sup> Her mother specifically asked for a child who would, in the end, devote his life to God and only God since her prayer was specific that the child would give up this worldly life and focus only on '*ibādah*'<sup>473</sup> and serving in the cause of God. Upon finding out that she gave birth to a female infant, she did not change her intention, even though, at that time, there were certain limitations that a female bore that a male would otherwise be free of in terms of worshipping and entering the temple (*haykal*). Regardless, Maryam grew up in devotion to God, partly in the temple, up to her twelfth years of age, when she was to enter puberty through menstruation, supposedly.<sup>474</sup> As mentioned in *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, during that time, only men could enter the *haykal*. Furthermore, menstruating women are not allowed to enter it. Maryam's father, 'Imrān, was the head of the rabbis of the *haykal* at that time. Thus when they found out about Maryam's mother's vow to dedicate her to serve in the *haykal*, they had to make an exception to the rule and draw arrows to pick who would be best to be her guardian.<sup>475</sup>

<sup>469</sup> *And she took, in seclusion from them, a screen. Then We sent to her Our Angel [i.e., Gabriel], and he represented himself to her as a well-proportioned man. (Qur'ān 19:17).*

<sup>470</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, accessed June 29 2022, <https://tafsir.app/tabari/19/17>.

<sup>471</sup> Abū al-Hasan 'Alī bin Muḥammad bin Ḥabīban al-Māwardī al-Baṣrī, *al-Nukat wa al-'Uyūn*, vol. 3, ed. Al-Sayyid bin 'abd al-Maqsud bin 'Abd al-Raḥīm (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilmīyah), 362, accessed October, 2021, [https://archive.org/details/waq60479/03\\_60481/page/n362/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/waq60479/03_60481/page/n362/mode/2up).

<sup>472</sup> In Arabic, the word '*amah*' means a female slave.

<sup>473</sup> Qur'ān 3:35

<sup>474</sup> *The Book of James – Protevangelium, "The Apocryphal New Testament,"* Ch. VIII., ed. Dave J. Giles and ed. M.R. James (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924), 1-2, accessed: July 24, 2022, <http://gnosis.org/library/gosjames.htm>.

<sup>475</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-katheer/3/44>.

This specialness of Maryam as a woman most likely comes with social consequences, such as her exclusion from everyday social life and family. The role of women in early Israel's households was of utmost significance. Their power and status lay in line with their functions in every household in ancient and pre-industrial times. Starting from being the 'trees' to the fruition of human-kind which constructs clans and tribes up to the national level,<sup>476</sup> up to delivering as managers of the food and clothing production in their smallest social unit, the family.<sup>477</sup> In socialization and education, women of ancient Israel are the principal teachers to their future generation in this household center nation.<sup>478</sup> Thus in the unfolding of Maryam's story, her role in society seemed to have deviated from the general custom, completely absolving herself from the power and status of the everyday living of womanhood at that time. However, ironically, God had a bigger plan for her despite her mother's intention of this devotion to God; she was not only to have a decisive role in an upbringing of a child but a prophet that would change the world. Not only that, but this story comes with an unusual catch, she is to be impregnated without any consummation with any human beings, thus maintaining her status as a virgin until the end of her life, absolving her from the touch of men.

#### 4.2.2.1. The Angel's Visit

Surah Āli Imrān mentions the event of the visit of the angel of glad tidings to Maryam in the following two verses:

إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنْهُ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ

وَيُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

*idh qālat al-malāikatu yā Maryamu inna Allāhā yubashshiruki bi kalimatīn minhu ismuhu al-masīh 'Isā ibnu Maryam wajīhān fī al-dunyā wa al-ākhirati wa min al-muqarrabīn, wa yukallimu al-nāsa fī al-mahdi wa kahlan wa min al-ṣāliḥīn.*<sup>479</sup>

<sup>476</sup> Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve, Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 165.

<sup>477</sup> Meyers, *Discovering Eve*, 147.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>479</sup> Qur'ān 3:45-46. [And mention] when the angel said, "O Mary, indeed Allah gives you good tidings of a word from Him, whose name will be the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary - distinguished in this world and

The verses above mention a few pertinent points that *sūrah* Maryam does not:

- a) The use of the word *yubashshiruki* conveys the glad tidings upon Maryam, where the doer is Allāh, and not 'Rabbuki.'
- b) Prophet 'Īsā expressed as "*kalimah minhu*," and his name is mentioned here, *al-Māsīh' Īsa ibn Maryam*.
- c) And then his character: *wajīhan fi al-dunya wa al-ākhirah*, was honored in this world and the next.
- d) Furthermore, *min al-muqarrabīn* (he will be), from those who are very near (to God).
- e) He will also have the following characteristics: *yukallimu al-nāsa fi al-mahdi wa kahlā*, he will speak to people in the cradle and maturity, and
- f) *wa min al-ṣāliḥīn*, and will be of the righteous.

Thus from the above, it can be concluded that the angel conveys to Maryam 5 attributes of her soon-to-be son, 'Īsā, namely: that he is a word of God, a *kalimah*, that his name is 'Īsā bin Maryam, a son attributed only to his mother which indicates Maryam's true *karāmah* as a virgin mother.<sup>480</sup> *wajīhan*, *al-muqarrab*, that he speaks in infancy, and from the *al-ṣāliḥīn*, those who are righteous.

However, the angel's visit in *sūrah* Maryam commences only upon Maryam's undertaking (underlined):

*fa ittakhadhat min dūnihim hijāban fa arsalnā ilayhā rūhanā fa tamaththala lahā basharan sawiyyā*).

(And she took, in seclusion from them, a screen. Then We sent to her Our Angel, and he represented himself to her as a well-proportioned man<sup>481</sup>

From the above verse, a few pertinent points materialize:

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*the Hereafter and among those brought near [to Allah. He will speak to the people in the cradle and maturity and will be of the righteous."*

<sup>480</sup> Burhān al-Dīn abī al-Hasan Ibrāhīm al-Biqāī *Naẓm al-Durar fī Tanāsubi al-Āyāti wa al-Suwari*, altafsir.com, altafsir.com, Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2021, accessed Oct. 30 2021, <https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=25&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=17&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>481</sup> Qur'ān 19:17.

- a) The mention of Maryam's undertaking before the angel came to her: building a screen that wholly secluded and protected her from the view of her family and people in general. Quoting from Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī, "*fa arsalnā ilaihā ḥīna intabadhat min ahlihā makānan sharqīyya,*" meaning that the angle came *at the time (ḥīna)* the seclusion happened.<sup>482</sup>
- b) The mention of sequence with the harf 'atf'fā" and the *ma'tūf* being God's delivery of God's *Rūh* to her.
- c) Then the *Rūh* (the angel Jibrīl) came shaped like a perfect human being (*basharan sawiyyā*). It is narrated that the shape of the angel in the form of a human being was in order for Maryam not to run away because if the angel were to come in his actual shape, she would have fled and would not have listened to the message. At the same time, it was also God's test for Maryam's '*iffah*<sup>483</sup> and *hayā*'.<sup>484</sup>

In both narrations, it is clear that the act of the angel coming and visiting Maryam to give a divine message is a divine *rahmah* manifested, as this *rahmah* is an expression of God's closest indirect communication to a person and a sign of His ever watchfulness and guardian over the person.

#### 4.2.2.2. Maryam's Seeking of Protection by the Name of God "*al-Raḥmān*"

Then the story continues with verse 18, which portrays the response of Maryam to this act of God: *Qālat innī a'ūdhu bi al-Raḥmāni minka in kunta taqiyyā.*<sup>485</sup> Keeping in mind what *sūrah Ālī* Imrān mentions regarding Maryam's initial reaction upon the arrival of

<sup>482</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, accessed: Oct. 30, 2021, <https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=1&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=17&tDisplay=yes&Page=2&Size=1&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>483</sup> The word '*iffah*' here is usually loosely translated in English as chastity while the proceeding word '*hayā*,' bashfulness. However, because of their deeper and vast meanings, these translations do not convey justice to the words.

<sup>484</sup> Abū Ḥayyān, *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, Surah 19, Verse 17, altafsir.com, Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, accessed October 30, 2021, <https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=19&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=17&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>485</sup> She said, "Indeed, I seek refuge in the Most Merciful from you, [so leave me] if you should be fearing Allah." Qur'ān 19:17

the angel messenger, let us consider the following points from this incident from the perspective of *sūrah* Maryam:

- a) She immediately performed *taawwudh* to God by mentioning the specific name of Allāh, '*al-Raḥmān*'. The verse suggests the significance of the usage of the name of Allāh '*al-Raḥmān*' amongst His ninety-nine names and attributes. Maryam understands her weakness and that if the person in front of her were to harm her, then she would not be able to defend herself; thus, she asks the mercy and assistance from the Most Merciful, *al-Raḥmān*.<sup>486</sup>
- b) She asks from her rabb whose servants are always deserving of His *raḥmah* and *ni'mah*, but even extensively more for some.<sup>487</sup>
- c) She hopes this utterance will make whosoever came upon her while she was secluded and alone prevent himself from doing wrong to her, but only if he is God-fearing (*taqīyyā*).

#### 4.2.2.3. The Reply of the Angel

Then verse nineteen continues the story with the reply of the angel: *Qāla innamā anā rasūlu rabbiki li ahaba laki ghulāman zakiyyā* (He said, "I am only the messenger of your Lord to give you [news of] a pure boy.)."<sup>488</sup> It is evident that *sūrah* Maryam recorded the reply of the angel dissimilarly from what *sūrah* Āli' Imrān portrays:

- a) The verse does not mention the word '*al-malāikah*' here; instead, it mentions '*rasūl rabbiki*'.
- b) The verse does not use the word *Allāh* but '*rabbuki*' instead.

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<sup>486</sup> 'Aṣām al-Dīn Ismā'īl bin Muḥammad al-Hanafī and Muṣliḥ al-Dīn Muṣṭafā bin Ibrāhīm al-Rūmī al-Ḥanafī, *Hāshīyyah al-Qūnawī 'alā al-Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī wa ma'ahu Hāshīyyah ibn al-Tamjīd*, vol. 12, ed. 'Abd Allāh Maḥmud Muḥammad 'Umar (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2001), 207.

<sup>487</sup> al-Biqā'i, *Naẓm al-Durar*,

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=25&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=18&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>488</sup> Qur'ān 19:19.

- c) The verse does not mention the verb '*yubashiruka*'; instead, it states '*liahaba laki*'. The word derivative from the maṣḍar '*hibah*', the act of giving someone a gift, is highlighted.
- d) The mention of Prophet 'Īsā as '*ghulaman zakiyyā*,' a pure boy. *Sūrah Ālī' Imrān*, however, mentions 'Isa by the word '*kalimah minhu*', a word from Him, and *by his title, al-Masīh ibn Maryam* (ismuhu *al-Masīh ibn Maryam*). Abu Hayyān in *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīt* mentions the meaning of *zakiyyah* in the description of the boy in '*ghulāman zakiyyah*' is purity concerning a pious nature (*al-ṣalāḥ*) and to prophethood (*al-nubūwwah*).<sup>489</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, in his tafsīr, considers this phrase to mean one who is purified from sins.<sup>490</sup>

Until now, the divine *raḥmah* of God is portrayed in the story in *sūrah* Maryam by the following points:

- a) The command of God to Prophet Muhammad to relate this story to others (*wa udhkur*) through the Qur'ān (*fi al-kitāb*), a mention of a name by God is a great honor and act of *raḥmah*.
- b) Other verses in other *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān, such as those in *sūrah al-Taḥrīm*, illustrate Maryam's characters grandiosely<sup>491</sup> and the divine consequences which come with them, and in *sūrah Ālī' Imrān* verse forty-two where God himself says that He has chosen Maryam over and above all of the women in the universe.<sup>492</sup> In this *sūrah*, in more subtle ways, God shows us her very act of seclusion and utmost *hayā'* from people, firstly by her actions of *intabadhat* and taking a *hijāb*. She gestured these acts after being in seclusion from her family and people; she had already secluded herself in the *miḥrāb*. Then, upon encountering the angel, she also confessed that men had never touched her, never

<sup>489</sup> Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīt*, Accessed October 29, 2021, <https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=19&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=17&tDisplay=yes&Page=3&Size=1&LanguageId=1>

<sup>490</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, accessed Oct. 29, 2021, <https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=1&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=18&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>491</sup> Qur'ān 66:12 and Ibn 'Āshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/66/12>. Ibn 'Āshūr mentions that God s marked her name permanently in the Qur'ān amongst the righteous women exceptionally because of her unprecedented guarding of her chastity (*iḥṣān farjihā*).

<sup>492</sup> Qur'ān 3:42.

wedded before, let alone acting unchastely (*baghiyya*). Thus it is from the special divine *rahmah* that God Himself showered her with the *tawfiq* to have this special chastity; proper guidance from God manifests divine *rahmah*.<sup>493</sup>

- c) Maryam takes protection from God by utilizing his name *al-Rahmān* amongst other great names of Allāh. This act of *al-ta'awwudh* indicates that the first thought that comes to her mind in fear of her safety is how merciful her Rabb is with certainty. Thus how intimately well she knows God's undying *rahmah* towards her.
- d) As will be seen further, the word *Rabb* is repeated in several places throughout the *sūrah*, including in Maryam's and 'Īsa's narrations. Apart from emphasizing the theme of '*Rabb and 'Abd*', its significance in this story is that Rabb is the owner, sustainer, manager, creator, and protector. A Rabb is the one who does *tarbiyyāh*, the process of rearing and nurturing something from small parts until completely established.<sup>494</sup> Al-Rabb (the Lord) is the One who sustains His creations, the source of *rahmah*, as mentioned in *sūrah* al-An'ām verse 147: *fa in kaddhabūka faqul rabbukum dhū rahmatin wasi'atin wa lā yaraddu ba'suhu 'an al-qawmi al-mujrimīn*.
- e) Because of her noble chastity and utmost *hayā'*, God sends her His *Rūh*, as some mentioned as the angel Jibrīl. This gift is of great prestige to any human being, as it is also usually deemed as a sign of prophethood when he comes equipped with revelations from God for the person.<sup>495</sup> However, in this very unusual occurrence, he came to a virgin woman to carry out a command from God contrary to her regular nature, having a child without the help of a man. So, again, this is an expression of an extraordinary divine *rahmah*. It is *rahmah* because humans would think that one can never have a child, let alone a prophet as a child when a woman chooses to dedicate herself only to God and sincerely guards her chastity against men.
- f) Using *li ahaba* (from *hibah*) means God is gifting Maryam, a boy. It is gifting without asking for anything in return or any conditions. Linguistically, Lane

<sup>493</sup> Al-Dāmaghānī, *Iṣlāḥ al-Wujūh wa al-Nazāir* (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm li al-Malāyīn, 1983), 201.

<sup>494</sup> Al-Aṣfahānī, s.v. “رب”, in *Al-Mufradāt*, accessed October 28, 2021, <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#amr=244>.

<sup>495</sup> As al-Qurṭubī inclined towards in his tafsīr of verse forty-two.

Lexicon defines the *maṣḍar hibah* as "A gift (or thing bestowed); properly, one that is freely and disinterestedly given, not for any compensation; a free, or disinterested, gift."<sup>496</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī, in his discussion about the concept of *hibah* in the interpretation of verse one hundred of *sūrah al-Ṣaffāt*, considers the concept of *hibah* to refer to the gifting of a child and several places in the Qur'ān, such as in *sūrah al-Anbiyā'* verse ninety and *al-An'ām* verse eighty-four, use it. Furthermore, `Ali bin Abī Ṭālib congratulated Ibn `Abbās for the birth of his child with the saying, "*Shakarta al-Wāhib, wa būrika laka fi al-mawhūb.*" Thus two derivatives of *hibah* were used.<sup>497</sup>

- g) The *hibah* of a *ghulaman zakiyyah*, a pure boy, indicates that the gift is not regular and represents a special *rahmah* from God. The gift not only becomes a special *rahmah* to Maryam, especially because she will give birth to a boy through an unusual means free from the touch of men, but this boy, *ghulām*, also possesses a unique characteristic of purity and chastity. The term *ghulām*, as discussed more in detail in the following section, indicates an age almost reaching puberty; thus, he is unique in that he remains pure for the rest of his life. The *ghulām zakiyyāh* fits right into her mother's extreme *`iffah*, chastity, and virtuousness.

#### 4.2.2.4. Maryam's Amazement Towards the Occasion

In the subsequent verse, Maryam expressed her amazement at the occasion: *Qālat annā yakūnu lī ghulāmun wa lam yamsanī basharun wa lam aku baghiyyā* (She said, "How can I have a boy while no man has touched me and I have not been unchaste?"),<sup>498</sup> where the following words come to the surface:

<sup>496</sup> Lane, s.v. "وہب" in *An Arabic English Lexicon*, 1: 3030, accessed October 28, 2021, <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#ll=3067>.

<sup>497</sup> al-Zamakhsharī, *Tafsīr al-Kashshaf*, accessed October 28, 2021, <https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=2&tSoraNo=37&tAyahNo=100&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>498</sup> Qur'ān 19:20.

- a. '*Ghulām.*' In Maryam's amazement at this gift from God, she replied to the angel using the same word, that of a young boy (*ghulām*). Note here that the word is emphasized just like in the case of the angel giving the glad tidings to prophet Zakariyyā in verse seven.<sup>499</sup>
- b. '*lam yamsasnī bashar,*' which says that she was never married before and
- c. '*lam aku baghiyyā*' expresses how she was never an unchaste woman.

There must be a reason why the word *ghulām* in *sūrah* Maryam is used in this incident and not *walad*, as is used in *sūrah* Āli' Imrān. Linguistically, '*walad*' carries a general meaning of *a child*, but the word '*ghulām*' connotes a boy. The `Arabs use it to express a male birth, as mentioned in *Misbah al-Munīr*.<sup>500</sup>

One of its lexical meanings is to express a boy who almost reaches that age where he can think for himself but is still young enough to be considered a boy and not yet an adult. In other words, a boy that almost reached puberty.<sup>501</sup> In *Kitāb al-`Ain*, the word *ghulām* relates to the growing of a mustache in full (*al-Ṭārr al-Shārib*) and the word *ghalām*, a year full of attacks and insurgence.<sup>502</sup> The word *ghulām* is also used when they can begin to carry more significant responsibilities, thus in verse twenty-four of *sūrah al-Ṭūr* uses the word *ghilmān* (plural for *ghulām*) to express young boys in *Jannah* who serve its inhabitants,<sup>503</sup> and the usage of the word *ghulām halīm* in verse 102 of *sūrah al-Ṣaffāt*<sup>504</sup> when God gives Prophet Ibrāhīm the glad tidings of a forbearing young boy. It also connotes the meaning of a slave.<sup>505</sup> This meaning, thus, is congruent with one of the goals of *surāh* Maryam; to prove that all creation are slaves to God, the Rabb, including prophet `Īsā.

<sup>499</sup> Qur'ān 19:7.

<sup>500</sup> Aḥmad bin `Alī al-Muqri' Al-Fayyūmī, s.v. "غمض", in *Misbāḥ al-Munīr*, Beirut: Maktabah Lubnān, 1987, 172, accessed November 21, 2021. <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#msb=179>.

<sup>501</sup> <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#auh=1160>, Umdat ul Huffaz (Arabic), page 1124, accessed: October 29, 2021, [ejtaal.net](http://ejtaal.net).

<sup>502</sup> al-Farāhīdī, al-Khalīl bin Aḥmad, *Kitāb al-'Ain Murattaban `alā ḥurūf al-Mu`jam*, al-Juz' al-Thālith (Vol. 3), (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2002), 289.

<sup>503</sup> Qur'ān 52:24.

وَيَطُوفُ عَلَيْهِمْ غِلْمَانٌ لَهُمْ كَأَنَّهُمْ لُؤْلُؤٌ مَكْنُونٌ

There will circulate among them [servant] boys [especially] for them as if they were pearls well-protected.

<sup>504</sup> Qur'ān 37:102.

<sup>505</sup> Ibn Manẓūr. s.v. "غلم", in *Lisān al-'Arab*, 3290, <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#la=3290>.

Hence from the above description, the word *ghulam* is more specific than the word *walad*; it not only identifies the gender of the child but what specific type within the gender. In this case, a young boy who does not only play but is mature enough also to carry responsibilities. Therefore, God's gift to the Virgin Mary, Maryam, of a young boy subtly gives a merrier glad-tiding than if the news had carried simply the word *walad*, a child.

Compare with the similar response depicted in *sūrah 'Ālī 'Imrān: Qālat rabbi annā yakūnu lī waladun wa lam yamsasnī basharun*.<sup>506</sup> This verse highlights the following words, phrases, or sentences:

- The word '*walad*', and not '*ghulam*'.
- '*lam yamsasnī bashar*', which says that she was never married before, without the additional character of being unchaste (*baghiyyā*).

#### 4.2.2.5. God's Response to Maryam

In *sūrah 'Ālī 'Imrān* God replies to Maryam through the angel; *Qāla kadhaliki Allahu yakhluqu mā ya shā'. Idhā qaḍā amran fa innamā yaqūlu lahu kun fayakūn*.<sup>507</sup> As shown, the key messages that transpire in this verse are:

- a) The ism *al-jalālah*, Allāh, is used instead of Rabb.
- b) God's ability to create what so ever He deemed to wish, *al-Khāliq*, the creator of things; *kadhālika Allāhu yakhluqu mā yashā'*, and
- c) He is *al-Qahhār*, the forceful *al-Muqtadir* when he decrees something no one can stop Him, '*idhā qaḍā amrān fa innamā yaqūlū lahū kun fayakūn*.
- d) The verse does not accentuate al-rahmah.

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<sup>506</sup> Translated as she said, "My Lord, how will I have a child when no man has touched me?" [The angel] said, "Such is Allah; He creates what He wills. When He decrees a matter, He only says to it, 'Be,' and it is. (Qur'ān 3:47)

<sup>507</sup> Translated as [The angel] said, "Such is Allah; He creates what He wills. When He decrees a matter, He only says to it, 'Be,' and it is. (Qur'ān 3:47).

God's reply in *sūrah* Maryam, on the other hand, focuses on the matter of the creation of 'Īsā itself, based on what God himself had said to the angel to convey to Maryam;<sup>508</sup>

*Qāla kadhāliki qāla rabbuki huwa 'alayya hayyin. Wa linaj'alahu āyatan linnāsi wa raḥmatan minnā wa kāna amran maqḍiyyā.*<sup>509</sup>

The verse directly points out the *easiness* of the creation of Maryam's soon-to-be son, as the angel says what God had said to him in a literal sense, *qāla* (the angle said), *kadhālika* (thus it will be), *qāla Rabbuki huwa 'alayya hayyin*). Thus convincing Maryam about the ease of the creation process, she should not worry about the 'how'. Then God also conveys the reason for sending Prophet 'Īsā to the world; as a sign to the people and a *raḥmah* from God.

Connotations which point towards a nuance of *raḥmah* in this verse, while not mentioned in *sūrah* Ālī 'Imrān:

- (1) Using the word '*hayyin*' leads to a feeling of comfort and that one needs not worry; someone capable is handling his or her matters efficiently.
- (2) The use of the word *raḥmatan minnā* depicts the reason for the birth of Maryam's son, 'Īsā. Tafsīr *Ibn Kathīr* states that this *raḥmah* means *nubuwwah*, prophethood, which will bring *raḥmah* and guidance to safety through 'Īsā's gentle character.<sup>510</sup>

#### 4.2.2.6. 'Īsā as a *Raḥmah*

*Sūrah* Maryam elaborated on the birth of 'Īsā as part of the narrative about his mother, Maryam bint 'Imran, where God instructed (prophet Muhammad) in verse sixteen to mention or to recite her story in the book (*wa udhkur fi al-kitabi Maryam*). As discussed in the previous sub-section, God states two reasons for the creation of prophet 'Īsā, as an

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<sup>508</sup> Qur'ān 19:21.

<sup>509</sup> Ibid., (translated as *He said, "Thus [it will be]; your Lord says, 'It is easy for Me, and We will make him a sign to the people and a mercy from Us. And it is a matter [already] decreed.'"*).

<sup>510</sup> Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr Tafsīr al-'Aẓīm, [altafsir.com](https://www.altafsir.com), Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2021, <https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=7&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=21&tDisplay=y&es&Page=3&Size=1&LanguageId=1>.

āyah to people, *āyatan li al-nās*, and as a *rahmah* specifically for Himself, *rahmatan minnā*.

#### 4.2.2.6.1. Interpretations of the Exegetes with the Pronoun Pointing to 'Īsā'

The exegetes differ in regards to the meaning of the phrase '*rahmatan minnā*' in the verse under scrutiny:

- (1) Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalūsī (d. 745/1344), in his celebrated works *al-Baḥr al-Muheet*, opted that the pronoun points at the *ghulām zakiyyā* himself (prophet `Isa) as well as the hidden pronoun in the '*kāna*' of the subsequent sentence '*kāna `amran maqdiyyā*'. Which means *wa kāna wujūduhu `amran maqdiyyā*. Here he opted that the word *rahmatan minnā* means that the coming of `Isa is a *rahmah* from God because with him comes guidance from God. Whosoever follows his guidance will thus obtain the *special rahmah* from God.<sup>511</sup>
- (2) Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/922), in his *Jāmi'u al-Bayan `an Ta'wīli Ayy al-Qur'an*, also opted for the pronoun to represent the *ghulām zakiyyā*, prophet `Isa. Al-Ṭabari shows the boy as a manifestation of the divine *rahmah* towards his mother and for those who believe in his unique creation through his virgin mother and those who believe in his message. However, he does not elaborate on how exactly Prophet `Isa is considered a *rahmah* towards his mother and those who believe in him.<sup>512</sup>
- (3) Ibn Kathir (d 774/1373), in his exegesis '*Tafsir al-Quran al-`Azīm*,' also inclines towards the *ghulām* as represented by the pronoun *hu* in '*linaj'alahu*'. He opined that the persona of the boy being a prophet that will guide humanity to the pure worship of the one God, Allah, expresses this al-*rahmah*.<sup>513</sup>
- (4) Ibn' Aṭīyyah (d.468/1075), in his exegesis '*Tafsīr al-Muharrar al-Wajīz fī Tafsīr al-Kitāb al-`Azīz*' also believes that the pronoun in the verb *naj'alahu* refers to *al-ghulām*, Prophet `Īsā, whereby the meaning of *rahmatan minnā* becomes the pathway of guidance from God to the world. Therefore, in the end, those who

<sup>511</sup> Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, <https://tafsir.app/albahr-almuheet/19/2>.

<sup>512</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, <https://tafsir.app/tabari/19/21>.

<sup>513</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-katheer/19/21>.

follow this guidance will certainly attain *rahmah*. He then elaborates no further on the issue.<sup>514</sup>

- (5) Al-Rāzī (d.606/1210), on the other hand, offers two possibilities for what the pronoun '*hu*' suggests. The first view is that the '*hu*' indicates the process of creating 'Īsā' itself; it becomes a sign of people in that the creation of 'Īsā' without a father was easy (thus a sign of the power and ability of God). As for it being a *rahmah* from God, it will provide ease and *rahmah* to both 'Īsā and Maryam. This connection is because the manifestation of the event becomes a clear proof for people around them, negating their evil accusations towards Maryam. When the pronoun '*hu*' points towards the *ghulam* himself, al-Rāzī considers him as an *āyah* for his mother to believe that the baby's anomalous deliverance to the world does not negate his plausible conception and existence. As for being *rahmatan minnā*, al-Rāzī only mentions to the extent that the terms are *ma'tūf 'alā* (connected) to the phrase *linaj' alahu āyatan minnā* and not more.<sup>515</sup>
- (6) Ibn 'Arabī (d. 638/1240), in his tafsīr '*Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*', mentions the meaning of divine *rahmah* here as the completeness of whatever was missing in the lives of the people at that time by God's book and law and the new teachings which he brought forth. Thus with this, people were able to attain guidance.<sup>516</sup>
- (7) Aḥmad bin 'Umar (d. 618/1222), in his '*Tafsīr al-Ta'wīliyāt al-Najmiyyah fī al-tafsīr al-Ishārī al-Ṣūfī*' mentions an essential point on the meaning of *rahmah* in this verse, whereby this verse resembles the verse directed towards prophet Muḥammad in which God says, *wa mā arsalnāka illa rahmatan li al-'alamīn*. Here God explicitly mentions the prophet as a *rahmah* for the worlds, that he carries in his body and soul the character of *rahmah* for the whole world. At the same time, in verse 21 of *sūrah*, Maryam God says that he made prophet 'Īsā as a

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<sup>514</sup> Ibn 'Aṭīyyah, *Al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz fī Tafsīr al-Kitāb al-'Azīz*, altafsir.com, Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2021, <https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=2&tTafsirNo=14&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=21&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>515</sup> al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr Maḥātib al-Ghaib*, accessed October 2021, <https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=4&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=21&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>516</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, altafsir.com, Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought 2021, <https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=3&tTafsirNo=33&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=21&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.

*rahmah* from Him; thus, he also is a manifestation of the character of *rahmah*. However, the difference here is the phrase *minnā* here, which indicates proportions, that prophet `Īsā's *rahmah* appeared during a lesser time and period than that of prophet Muḥammad. Therefore, God sent him to bani Isrā'īl only, while He sent Prophet Muhammad to the rest of the world until the end of time, including in the hereafter, where he will intercede for his people.<sup>517</sup>

(8) Mātūrīdī (d. 333/945), in his '*Tafsīr al-Ta'wīlāt Ahlu al-Sunnah*' emphasizes that *rahmatan* here is similar to *rahmah* of prophet Muḥammad. He further indicates that this further connotes that the sending of all prophets manifests divine *rahmah*.<sup>518</sup>

Thus it can be roughly concluded, based on the majority of the above opinions, that the *rahmah* of God in this verse points towards *ghulām zakīyyā*. At the same time, the rest opined towards the *rahmah* of the process of creation of prophet `Īsā. Furthermore, this *rahmah* is so vast that it touches him, his mother, Maryam bint' Īmrān, and those who later follow his teachings.

#### 4.2.2.6.2. *Rahmatan Minnā* in Other *Sūrahs* of the *Qur'ān*

The word *rahmah* comes in many different forms in the Qur'ān, like the one in this verse, where it comes as a phrase *rahmatan minna*. This section will examine the occurrences of this exact phrase in other verses to discover the possibility of a common reason behind these usages, including that in surah Maryam. The opinions of major exegetes will also be explored.

<sup>517</sup> Aḥmād bin `Umar, *Tafsīr al-Ta'wīlāt al-Najmīyyah fī al-Tafsīr al-Ishārī al-Šūfī* [Astrological Interpretations in the Spiritual and Sūfī Exegetical Works], [altafsir.com](https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=3&tTafsirNo=97&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=21&tDisplay=yes&Page=2&Size=1&LanguageId=1), Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2021, <https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=3&tTafsirNo=97&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=21&tDisplay=yes&Page=2&Size=1&LanguageId=1> and Ismā'īl Haqqī, *Rūḥ al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* [Soul of Clear Explanation in Qur'ānic Interpretation], [altafsir.com](https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=3&tTafsirNo=36&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=21&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1), Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2021, <https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=3&tTafsirNo=36&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=21&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>. A similar opinion is also expressed in Rūḥ al-Bayān.

<sup>518</sup> Abū Mansūr al-Mātūrīdī, *Tafsīr Ta'wīlāt Ahl al-Sunnah* [Interpretations of the People of the Sunnah], [altafsir.com](https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=2&tTafsirNo=94&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=21&tDisplay=yes&Page=2&Size=1&LanguageId=1), Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2021, <https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=2&tTafsirNo=94&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=21&tDisplay=yes&Page=2&Size=1&LanguageId=1>.

The Qur'ān demonstrates the use of the phrase *rahmatan minnā* in two forms, first in a state of *nasab* (accusative) without any attached prepositions, usually acting as a *maf'ūl lahu*, or *maf'ūl li ajlihi* (the accusative for purpose). This form acts as an accusative object representing the reason or purpose of a happening. The other form usually attaches to a *ḥarf"bi"*. The first type comes in 3 places in the Qur'ān while the latter comes in 4 places. *Rahmatan Minna* in the *Nasab* form comes in four places in the Qur'ān (as underlined):

- (1) <sup>519</sup> إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِّنَّا وَمَتَاعًا إِلَىٰ حِينٍ
- (2) <sup>520</sup> وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ أَهْلَهُ وَمِثْلَهُم مَّعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِّنَّا وَذِكْرَىٰ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ
- (3) <sup>521</sup> وَلَئِن أَدْقْنَا رَحْمَةً مِّنَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ ضَرَاءٍ مَّسْتَه لَيَقُولَنَّ هَذَا لِي وَمَا أَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَائِمَةً وَلَئِن رُجِعْتُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي إِنَّ لِي عِنْدَهُ لَلْحُسْنَىٰ فَلَنُنَبِّئَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَلَنُذِيقَنَّهُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيظٍ
- (4) <sup>522</sup> قَالَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ رَبُّكَ هُوَ عَلَيَّ هَيِّئٌ وَلَنَجْعَلَنَّ آيَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَرَحْمَةً مِّنَّا وَكَانَ أَمْرًا مَّقْضِيًّا

At a glance, it can be seen from the above verses - particularly from the first three - that the phrase connotes relief from a challenging situation. In the first case, God talks about relief from drowning, connected to the preceding verse. In the second verse, the phrase relates to the tribulation of prophet Ayyūb, losing his whole family when the illness overcame him. Lastly, the one in the third verse depicts the relief that came after *al-ḍarrā* (harm and stressful situation). The verse under scrutiny is the last one, verse twenty-one of *sūrah Maryam*.

As for the phrase *rahmah minnā* which comes with an attached particle 'bi', they can be found in the *Qur'ān* in four places, as shown underlined below:

- (1) <sup>523</sup> فَأَنجَيْنَاهُ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنَّا وَقَطَّعْنَا دَابِرَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَمَا كَانُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ
- (2) <sup>524</sup> وَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا هُودًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنَّا وَنَجَّيْنَاهُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيظٍ

<sup>519</sup> Qur'ān 36:44.

<sup>520</sup> Qur'ān 38: 43.

<sup>521</sup> Qur'ān 41:50.

<sup>522</sup> Qur'ān 19:21.

<sup>523</sup> Qur'ān 7:72.

<sup>524</sup> Qur'ān 11:58.

- فَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا صَالِحًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا وَمِن خِزْيِ يَوْمِئِذٍ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْقَوِيُّ الْعَزِيزُ<sup>525</sup> (3)
- وَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا شُعَيْبًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا وَأَخَذَتِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا الصَّيْحَةَ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دِيَارِهِمْ جَاثِمِينَ<sup>526</sup> (4)

Here, it can be seen that the context of all four verses is about *najāḥ* from *`adhāb*, the rescue of the believers in the event of God's severe punishment for the unbelievers. The following sub-section discusses the above topics in more detail by taking one verse from each category above as an example.

#### 4.2.2.6.3. *Raḥmatan Minnā* in the Accusative Form

The following discussions will focus on the word *raḥmah* without the preposition *bi*. First, it will examine the concept of *raḥmah* in the verses in which the phrase *raḥmah minnā* comes in the accusative (*nasab*) state. Further, it will discover the differences, if any, with the concept of *raḥmah* concluded from the previous section.

*Raḥmatan minnā* is also found in verse forty-four of *sūrah* Yāsin, *without* the addition of the *harf "bi"*<sup>527</sup>

وَأَيُّ لَهُمْ أَنَّا حَمَلْنَا ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ فِي الْفُلِكِ الْمَشْحُونِ ﴿٤١﴾ وَخَلَقْنَا لَهُمْ مِن مِّثْلِهِ مَا يَرْكَبُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَإِن نَّشَأْ نُغْرِقْهُمْ فَلَا صَرِيحَ لَهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنقَذُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَمَتَاعًا إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٤٤﴾

In the above, the term *raḥmatan minnā* comes as an *al-istithnā al-mufarragh* in the meaning of *maf'ūl li ajlihi*, accusative for purpose<sup>528</sup>. The context of these verses is the ship as a sign of the majestic and ability of God, that He is the single power and ability

<sup>525</sup> Qur'ān 11:66.

<sup>526</sup> Qur'ān 11:94.

<sup>527</sup> Qur'ān 36:41-44, And a sign for them is that We carried their forefathers in a laden ship. (41) And We created for them from the likes of it that which they ride. (42) And if We should will, We could drown them; then no one responding to a cry would there be for them, nor would they be saved (43) Except as a mercy from Us and provision for a time. (44) (Translation by Saheeh International).

<sup>528</sup> Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muhīt*,

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=19&tSoraNo=36&tAyahNo=44&tDisplay=yes&Page=11&Size=1&LanguageId=1>.

which holds the ships afloat and that the passengers are kept safe. In this case, the verses start off with the ship of prophet Nūḥ which carried in it the forefathers of mankind. The phrase *raḥmatan minnā* here also expresses Allah's relief, in this case, relief and protection from the severe flood and drowning by making the sea stable and for those in the ship to hold fast to the boat.<sup>529</sup> It depicts that their ability to continue to live after this ordeal until their appointment of death is due exclusively to the *raḥmah* from God and nothing but it.<sup>530</sup> This very *raḥmah* is the protection of humankind from *al-ḍarrā'*, hardships, and stressful situations, in this case, being drowned by the waves, being the opposite of *al-sarrā'* (comfort) and *al-naḥ'* (benefit).<sup>531</sup> In this context, the verses do not refer directly to the concept of severe punishment (*adhāb ghalīz*) as the two verses in the previous section did, but more towards a complicated situation that only God can relieve. Let us now look into another verse where the phrase *raḥmah minnā* (underlined) comes as *manṣūb*, located within the following verses of *sūrah Ṣād*:<sup>532</sup>

﴿٤١﴾ وَادْكُرْ عَبْدَنَا أَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَى رَبَّهُ أُنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الشَّيْطَانُ بِنُصْبٍ وَعَذَابٍ  
﴿٤٢﴾ ارْكُضْ بِرِجْلِكَ هَذَا مُغْتَسَلٌ بَارِدٌ وَشَرَابٌ  
﴿٤٣﴾ وَخُذْ بِيَدِكَ ضِغْتًا فَاضْرِبْ بِهِ وَلَا تَحْنُتْ ۗ إِنَّا وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ أَهْلَهُ وَمِثْلَهُم مَّعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَذِكْرَى لَأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ  
﴿٤٤﴾ وَجَدْنَاهُ صَابِرًا ۗ نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ

In this *sūrah*, God introduces prophet Ayyūb to the reader with the title of '*abdanā*', our slave. He also repeats the mention of the words with the roots of w-h-b (of *hibah*) in three of its verses.<sup>533</sup> One of its central themes is about *fitan*, trials, and responses to the trials depicted by the faithful slaves of God, His prophets.<sup>534</sup> The verses above portray prophet

<sup>529</sup> Ibn Āshūr, *Al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/36/44>.

<sup>530</sup> Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Bahr al-Muhīṭ*, <https://tafsir.app/albahr-almuheet/36/44>.

<sup>531</sup> Quraish Shihab, s.v. "الضراء", in *Ensiklopedia al-Quran Kajian Kosa Kata*, Arabic Almanac v6.1, Mawrid Reader v3.1, accessed October 31, 2021, <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#ens=172>.

<sup>532</sup> Qur'ān 38:41-44 (Translated as: And remember Our servant Job, when he called to his Lord, "Indeed, Satan has touched me with hardship and torment." [So he was told], "Strike [the ground] with your foot; this is a [spring for a] cool bath and drink." And We granted him his family and a like [number] with them as a mercy from Us and a reminder for those of understanding. [We said], "And take in your hand a bunch [of grass] and strike with it and do not break your oath." Indeed, We found him patient, an excellent servant. Indeed, he was one repeatedly turning back [to Allah].)

<sup>533</sup> See Qur'ān 38:30, 35, and 43

<sup>534</sup> Sayyid Quṭb, *In the Shade of the Qur'ān*, Vol. 14 [no publication info], 292-293, Kalamullah.com, Accessed: October 31, 2021,

Ayyūb as an 'abd, who is oft returning to Allah (*awwāb*) and patient (*ṣābir*). The word *fatannā* is also repeated multiple times in the stories of the prophets mentioned in this *sūrah*, such as in the stories of prophet Sulaymān and Dāwūd. Moreover, the verb *wahaba* is used a few times in their stories in addition to the one used in the story of Nabi Ayyub.

In the above verses, the use of *rahmah* with the addition of a *nu'āt* in the form of *jarr wa majrūr* (*minnā*) is placed only within the same sentence of the *hibah* of his family and another additional family. This happening is a part of the answer to prophet Ayyūb's *du'ā*, a relief from the *fitnah* of the devil (*al-shāitān*) towards him (*al-waswasah*), as a sign of him returning to Allah during trials like so. The fact that he realized that what came over him was the *waswasah* from the devil in the first place, in addition to his positive reaction towards it, i.e., he did not submit to the whispers, entitles him to a *hibah* from Allāh in the shape of the return of his family and the like of them, as God has similarly indicates the other gifts He had bestowed upon other prophets mentioned in the same *sūrah*.<sup>535</sup> And this *hibah* is a special *rahmah* that came straight from God himself.

A similar narrative in *sūrah al-Anbiyā'*, on the other hand, uses the term *rahmatan min 'indinā* (underlined below). However, more than this, the verb *ātaynā* is used instead of *wahabnā* to express God's bestowment of children and family:<sup>536</sup>

(٨٣) وَأَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الضُّرُّ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ  
(٨٤) وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ ۖ فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ فَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِ مِنْ ضُرٍّ ۖ وَآتَيْنَاهُ أَهْلَهُ وَمِثْلَهُمْ مَعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا وَذَكَرَىٰ لِلْعَابِدِينَ  
(٨٥) وَإِذْ يُرِيسُ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصَّابِرِينَ

In the above verses, notice prophet Ayyūb's calling for his Lord by his most merciful name, *arham al-Rāḥimīn*, after mentioning the word *al-ḍurr*. The narratives also state the

[https://www.kalamullah.com/Books/InTheShadeOfTheQuranSayyidQutb/volume\\_14\\_surahs\\_33-39.pdf](https://www.kalamullah.com/Books/InTheShadeOfTheQuranSayyidQutb/volume_14_surahs_33-39.pdf).

<sup>535</sup> Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr Maḥāṭib al-Ghaib*,

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=4&tSoraNo=38&tAyahNo=42&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>536</sup> Qur'ān 21:83-85 (And [mention] Job, when he called to his Lord, "Indeed, adversity has touched me, and You are the most merciful of the merciful." So We responded to him and removed what afflicted him of adversity. And We gave him [back] his family and the like thereof with them as mercy from Us and a reminder for the worshippers [of Allah].).

removal (*kashf*) of the *ḍurr* in '*atf*' (connection) with the verb *ātaynāhu*. All of these affect the concept of *raḥmah* in verse eighty-four in comparison to that of *sūrah* Ṣād before.

In addition, the adverb '*inda*' (in the proximity to), which comes after the word *raḥmah*, is a sign of particular preference, ownership, and nearness, that of '*indiyyah*'. This more specific *raḥmah* from God comes as a reply to Ayyūb's calling to God by his special name, '*wa anta arḥam al-Rāhimīn*' because it is impossible for the One with this attribute not to lift the great distress (al-ḍurr). This *raḥmah* is in the form of *maf'ul li ajlihi*<sup>537</sup>, thus the expression of '*raḥmah min 'indinā*' signifies the very reason for the *kashf* of the harm as well as the *ītā'* of the family.<sup>538</sup> His family and children had died, and only by His *raḥmah* Allah replaces and multiplies the numbers of progeny for him. So God enriched him with a large family and wealth for 80 years.<sup>539</sup> Al-Rāzī also considers that all that God did for prophet Ayyūb is nothing but a *raḥmah* from Him and not an obligation.<sup>540</sup> It is a gift from the Lord, who is most appreciative of those who show extreme patience,<sup>541</sup> such as prophet Ayyūb who endured his sickness for eighteen years<sup>542</sup> without a single complaint.<sup>543</sup>

In summary, in *sūrah* al-Anbiyā', there is no use of the word '*abd*'. However, the words *nādā*, *istijāba*, *najā*, and *ātaynā* repeats many times. According to Dr. Fāḍil al-Sāmarrā'ī, in *Lamasāt Bayāniyyah*, the word *ītā'* signifies an increase in meaning, more than *hibah*,

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<sup>537</sup> Ibn `Āshūr, *Tafsīr al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, accessed: Oct. 31, 2021

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=54&tSoraNo=21&tAyahNo=84&tDisplay=yes&Page=2&Size=1&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>538</sup> Al-Ṭabaṭabāī, *Tafsīr al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, altafsir.com, Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2021,

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=56&tSoraNo=21&tAyahNo=84&tDisplay=yes&Page=3&Size=1&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>539</sup> Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Rāzī*, <https://tafsir.app/alrazi/21/84>.

<sup>540</sup> Al-Rāzī, *Mafātiḥ al-Ghaib*, accessed October 31, 2021,

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=4&tSoraNo=38&tAyahNo=42&tDisplay=yes&Page=4&Size=1&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>541</sup> Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, accessed: October 10, 2021,

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=19&tSoraNo=38&tAyahNo=42&tDisplay=yes&Page=3&Size=1&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>542</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Jāmi'*, <https://tafsir.app/qurtubi/38/43>; Al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa al-'Uyūn*, <https://tafsir.app/almawirdee/38/43>. Al-Qurṭubī mentions that there are differences in opinions regarding how long Prophet Ayyūb underwent the trial, from less than five years to forty years. Al-Māwardī in his *tafsīr*, mentions at least five opinions as to what happened to the family of prophet Ayyūb.

<sup>543</sup> Many other narrations state less than eighteen years.

which is more specific.<sup>544</sup> Thus it correlates to the usage of the phrase *rahmah min' indinā* in this *sūrah*, which signifies a more unique and extra *rahmah* than simply *rahmatan minnā* used in *sūrah* Ṣād.

This *sūrah* indicates, emphasized with the repetition of the words *istijābah* and *nādā*, that it is only *Allāh* who answers the supplications during harm; He is the One who gives what is needed to solve problems. The core of the message is the fact that Allah is the One who bestows on his creations, the One who tests, and the One who sees the reactions of his *'ibād* during these struggles. Thus, the overwhelming usage of a more general verb, *ātaynā* and not *wahabnā*.

#### 4.2.2.6.4. *Rahmatan Minnā* with an Attached Particle

Verse 72 of *sūrah* al-A'rāf is part of a series of verses where God talks about the narrations of the punishments which came to the disbelieving people of 'Ād to whom prophet Hūd was sent. In this verse, God mentions His fatal punishment for those who belied the signs of God while saving Prophet Hūd and his followers. His rescue for them (depicted by the word *anjaynāhu*) is expressed by way of *rahmah* from "us" (*bi rahmatin minnā*):<sup>545</sup>

فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا وَقَطَعْنَا دَابِرَ  
الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا<sup>ط</sup> وَمَا كَانُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ

The punishment that came upon the people of 'Ād of prophet Hūd is also mentioned in several other places of the Qur'ān. One place is in *sūrah* al-Hāqqah<sup>546</sup>:

<sup>544</sup> Fāḍil al-Sāmarrā'ī, "Mā al-Farq bayna al-Ītā' wa al-Hibah, Dr. Fāḍil al-Sāmarrā'ī" (What is the difference between al-Ītā' and al-Hibah, Dr. Fāḍil al-Sāmarrā'ī), Lamasāt Bayāniyyah, Ustādh Dr. Fāḍil al-Sāmarrā'ī, January 9, 2022, YouTube video, 0:43, <https://youtu.be/I8jPLv1MvY8>.

<sup>545</sup> Qur'ān 7:72. Translated as, "So We saved him and those with him by mercy from Us. And We eliminated those who denied Our signs, and they were not [at all] believers."

<sup>546</sup> Qur'ān 69:6-8. Translated as "And as for 'Aad, they were destroyed by a screaming, violent wind (6) Which Allah imposed upon them for seven nights and eight days in succession, so you would see the people therein fallen as if they were hollow trunks of palm trees. (7) Then do you see of them any remains? (8)".

{٦} سَخَّرَهَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَبْعَ لَيَالٍ وَتَمَازِيَةَ أَيَّامٍ حُسُومًا فَتَرَى الْقَوْمَ فِيهَا صَرْعَىٰ وَأَمَّا غَدُ فَأَهْلِكُوا بِرِيحٍ صِرَاصٍ عَاتِيَةٍ  
 {٧} كَانَتْهُمْ أَعْجَازُ نُحُلٍ خَالْوِيَةٍ  
 {٨} فَهَلْ تَرَىٰ لَهُم مِّن بَاقِيَةٍ

A punishment of a severely hot and loud wind which fuel was ignited continuously by specific men surrounding it, as depicted in one report, inflicts them for seven nights and eight days.<sup>547</sup> It would enter their nostrils and exit from their anuses, burning their internals and leaving them like a palm tree's hollow trunk.<sup>548</sup> Thus, one can never escape this affliction without knowing beforehand. Therefore, whosoever escapes from this must be given somewhat a miracle that goes against impossibility, a special *rahmah* that can only come from God.

The meaning of *rahmah* here is an infinite majestic *rahmah* (indicated by the indefinite form of the word *rahmah*), which comes specifically from Allāh' Azza wa Jallā.<sup>549</sup> This concept is indicated by the *jār wa majrūr' minnā'* with a hidden *mahdhūf* in order to justify it as a *ṣifah* (attribute) to this particular indefinite *rahmah*. Thus the characteristic of this *rahmah* is that which comes from Allah, whose quantity is innumerable. A *rahmah* bestowed upon them without effort.<sup>550</sup> It is remarkable and is the reason for the act of rescue, as indicated by the preposition (*bi*) preceding it.<sup>551</sup> Ibn' Āshūr also mentions that this *rahmah* is that of *muṣāhabah*, which means during their God's extraordinary rescue over them, this particular act is accompanied by His gentleness and care for the believers during the horrendous seven-day punishment that descended upon the people of 'Ād<sup>552</sup>. In *sūrah* Hūd, where God says<sup>553</sup> **وَلَمَّا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا نَجَّيْنَا هُودًا وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِنَّا وَنَجَّيْنَا هُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ غَلِيظٍ** the term *rahmāh* connotes to their redemption which is entirely dependent on the *rahmah* of God upon them, and not on their own efforts. Ibn' Āshūr points out that the term *najjaynā* is repeated twice, the first being from the specific *'adhāb* and the second

<sup>547</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-katheer/7/72>.

<sup>548</sup> Al-Ālūsī, *Tafsīr al-Ālūsī*, <https://tafsir.app/alaloosi/7/72>.

<sup>549</sup> Ibn Āshūr, *Al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/7/72>.

<sup>550</sup> Al-Biqā'ī, *Naẓm al-Durar*, <https://tafsir.app/nathm-aldurar/7/72>.

<sup>551</sup> Ibn 'Āshūr, *Al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, <https://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/7/72>.

<sup>552</sup> Ibid.

<sup>553</sup> Qur'ān 11:58. The verse is translated as 'And when Our command came, We saved Hud and those who believed with him, by mercy from Us; and We saved them from a harsh punishment.'

being from a severe punishment in the hereafter. The repetition of the verb twice indirectly indicates that the first rescue is strictly due to a special *rahmah* from God, while the second is also due to their righteous actions in the lower world (*dunya*). That is why only in the first sentence is the verb *najjaynā* connected to a *muta'alliq*, "*bi rahmatin minnā*."<sup>554</sup> Furthermore, even if one were to argue that God saved them as a result of their righteous actions, it was utterly dependent upon the guidance and enlightenment from God in the form of this *rahmah*. By it also, He forgave them and distinguished them from those who disbelieved<sup>555</sup>, for otherwise, the destruction will envelop believers as tribulations.

#### 4.2.2.6.5. Conclusion to the Topic of "Raḥmatan Minnā"

From the above verses, three deductions can be withdrawn:

- (1) First, the phrase *rahmatan minnā* in *mansūb* as a *maf'ūl li ajlihi* or *maf'ūl lahu* denotes God's relief from a harmful or stressful situation.
- (2) The phrase *bi rahmatan minnā* usually denotes God's rescue for a prophet and his believers in the face of severe punishment (*adhāb*) for his unbelieving people.
- (3) Thus based on point one above, the case of *rahmatan minnā* in verse twenty-one of *sūrah Maryam* most probably leads towards the meaning of the birth of 'Īsā or his existence being God's relief from a challenging situation. The only difference is that in the case of the birth of baby 'Īsā, the phrase comes as a *maf'ūl bihi* for the verb *ja'ala*, *li naj'alahū āyatan li al-nāsi wa rahmatan minnā*. However, the meaning would be similar because it comes as a meaning of purpose or reason, just as the one in the first point is.

To summarize, the phrase *rahmatan minnā* in the discussed verses serves as a mercy, help, and rescue from God to particular people either in the event of punishment to others or in severe circumstances. These circumstances are unsolvable by humankind, as in the case of prophet Ayyūb's illness, and when water surrounds anybody with no one around to save him or her. At the same time, it goes the same as in the case of the severe punishment that

<sup>554</sup> Ibn 'Āshūr, *Al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, <http://tafsir.app/ibn-aashoor/11/58>.

<sup>555</sup> Al-Rāzi, *Tafsīr al-Rāzi*, <https://tafsir.app/al-razi/11/58>.

came to the people who disobeyed prophet Hūd. In the case of prophet Ayyūb, it came after his years of suffering and perseverance.<sup>556</sup> With this trial, he lost everything, including his family and his wealth. Thus it was out of the special divine *raḥmah* that God bestowed back not only his family but with the addition of the likes of his family at the end of this trial.<sup>557</sup>

However, a few consequential questions follow: if we consider the exact relationship between the phrase *raḥmatan minnā* and God's help and rescue in the case of prophet `Īsā in *sūrah* Maryam, who is the object of the rescue in this case, then? If the object here is his mother, Maryam, then how does the birth of `Īsā or `Īsā himself, be a *raḥmah* which saves her? A further challenging question would be, *from what is she rescued?*

We can go back to the life of Maryam where she dedicated her life to God, and in one Israelite narration, it was said that she had promised to remain a virgin to God, consequently abstaining from matrimony.<sup>558</sup> This means that she not only dedicated herself body and soul to God but she had an ultimate *`iffah* and pureness, so much so that she was willing to sacrifice her chance of being a mother, sacrificing her womb from the possibility of delivering a human being into the world to serve God, a natural inclination for a pious woman in general. Let alone for pious women; motherhood is something that would be considered, especially during her time, as noble and as a much-needed role for women.<sup>559</sup> However, God does not need means to create what He wills. Thus with the creation of `Īsā, He 'relieved' Maryam from her current situation of deliberately not having a family, her sacrifice for God. `Īsā is the *raḥmah* of God manifested in Maryam with the experience of being a mother, from conception to birth, not to mention bringing up a son, *a ghulām zakīyy*, one who also guards his chastity incredibly, just like her, and not to

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<sup>556</sup> Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Bahr al-Muḥīt*, <https://tafsir.app/albahr-almuheet/38/43>. Al-Bahr al-Muḥīt mentions this in a narration by Anas bin Mālik.

<sup>557</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr al-Jāmi'*, <https://tafsir.app/qurtubi/38/43>; Al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa al-'Uyūn*, <https://tafsir.app/almawirdee/38/43>.

<sup>558</sup> "The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew" (Chap. 8), The Gnostic Society Library, Christian Apocrypha and Early Christian Literature, accessed October 2021, <http://gnosis.org/library/psudomat.htm>.

<sup>559</sup> John Hilton III and Lani Hilton, "Motherhood in the Old Testament," in *The Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament*, edited by D. Kelly Ogden, Jared W. Ludlow, and Kerry Muhlestein, (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2009), 34, accessed: January 11, 2023, <https://rsc.byu.edu/gospel-jesus-christ-old-testament/motherhood-old-testament>.

mention, a *nabī*. Thus he was able to be a mother to this special boy without sacrificing her *‘iffah* and remained a virgin, free from the touch of men. This character of *iffah* in her confirms her portrayal in the hadith about her being one of the best women of all time:<sup>560</sup>

*‘Abdullāh b. Ja’far reported that he heard ‘Ali say in Kūfa that Allāh’s Messenger (ﷺ) said:*

*The best of the women of her time was Mary, daughter of ‘Imrān, and the best of the women of her time was Khadījah, daughter of Khuwailid. Abū Kuraib said that Waki pointed towards the sky and the earth.*

On the other hand, if the concept of the *rahmah minnā* points towards the people at that time, who were ancient Jews, then a more relevant question would be, ‘What were the social and political situations of the people at that time and place? Why must God send Prophet ‘Īsā to them as a *rahmah* to rectify their conditions?’ The verse remains quiet on this matter, and the exegetes only mention that prophets are *rahmah* towards their people as following their footsteps guarantees their salvation in this life and the next. In this way, the divine *rahmah* takes shape. However, other resources have indicated that the Jews in Palestine, where prophet ‘Īsā was born and lived, were having many challenging issues both within their own community and from the pressure of the governing Romans at that time.

Primary sources on the social and political context of the time of prophet ‘Īsā, historically speaking, are scarce. However, a most prominent and often-cited source is the works of Flavius Josephus, "The Antiquities of the Jews," where some significant social and political situations of the Jews, including those in Palestine in the first century AD, were recorded.<sup>561</sup> According to *Book XVIII*, where the period covered is presumably congruent

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<sup>560</sup> Abū al-Ḥusayn' Asākir ad-Dīn Muslim, "Sahih Muslim: The Book of the Merits of the Companions: The Virtues of Khadījah, The Mother of The Believers (RA): Hadith 2430, "sunnah.com, accessed: November 1, 2021, <https://sunnah.com/muslim:2430>.

<sup>561</sup> He was a Jewish-Roman Historian who lived between 37/38 - 100 AD and was the only Jewish priest and historian who is considered an eyewitness to the Jewish Revolt of 66-70 AD against the Romans. His works include The Jewish War, The Antiquity of the Jews, and The life against Apions.

to the time of 'Īsā's life, there were four different sects of Jews with different values; thus the original values and teachings that Prophet Mūsā had initially imparted were not maintained.<sup>562</sup> At the same time, the Romans had occupied Jerusalem bringing with them a considerably different way of governing and lifestyle, as the Romans were pagan worshippers contrary to Judaism which is a monotheistic religion.<sup>563</sup> According to another source, during the time of Prophet 'Īsā, the following injustices were pervasive such as gender issues; they treated women as second class. There were also race issues; two types of people were mentioned: the Jews and the Gentiles. Poverty and diverse social classes were prominent, as well as slavery, human trafficking, and child abuse.<sup>564</sup>

### 4.3. Divine *al-Raḥmah* in the Event of Maryam's Pregnancy and 'Īsā's Birth

#### 4.3.1. *Al-Raḥmah* in the Story of 'Īsā in Sūrah Āli 'Imrān

The previous sections have discussed some aspects of Maryam and 'Īsā' up to verse forty-seven, including from the perspective of the *raḥmah* of God for them. This section will attempt to examine further the central theme that emerged in the narration of 'Īsā in *sūrah* Āli 'Imrān. It will explore any relationship with the concept of *raḥmah*, which can be extracted by looking into verses 45 to 46 and 48 to 51 as God describes 'Īsā's noble characters as a messenger of God. In verses forty-five and forty-six, God introduces the being of 'Īsā by six attributes (underlined):

ذُ قَالَتِ الْمَلَائِكَةُ يَا مَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُبَشِّرُكِ بِكَلِمَةٍ مِنْهُ اسْمُهُ الْمَسِيحُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجِيهًا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَمِنْ  
(٤٥) الْمُقَرَّبِينَ

<sup>562</sup> Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, vol. 18 (chapter 1), trans. William Whiston, www.gutenberg.org, Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, 2017, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2848/2848-h/2848-h.htm#link182HCH0001>.

<sup>563</sup> Josephus, *The Antiquities of the Jews*, vol. 18 (chapter 3, 8, 11, and footnote 13 under Ch. 3), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/2848/2848-h/2848-h.htm#link182HCH0001>.

<sup>564</sup> Bakhoh Jatmiko, "The Equitable Jesus (Jesus' Ministries dealing with Injustice Issues in His Community Context)," *SANCTUM DOMINE JURNAL TEOLOGI* 5, No.1 (June 2017): 69-80, <https://doi.org/10.46495/sdjt.v5i1.34>.

*Idh qālat al-malāikatu yā Maryamu inna Allāha yubashiruki bi kalimatin minhu ismuhu al-Masīh 'Īsā ibn Maryama wajīhan fī al-dunya wa al-ākhirah wa min al-muqarrabīn<sup>565</sup>.*

(٤٦) وَيُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا وَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

*Wa yukallimu al-nāsa fī al-mahdi wa kahlan wa mina al-sāliḥīn<sup>566</sup>*

The characters mentioned in the above two verses expand as such:

- (1) as a word of God, *bi kalimatin minhu*
- (2) by his name: *al-Masīh, 'Īsā ibn Maryam*
- (3) That he will be distinguished in this word and the next, *wajīhan fī al-dunya wa al-ākhirah*
- (4) That he will be amongst those who are close to God, *wa min al-muqarrabīn*
- (5) That he will speak to the people (*wa yukallimu al-nāsa*) in the cradle (*al-mahd*) and maturity (*wa kahlan*).<sup>567</sup>
- (6) That he will be one of the righteous (*wa min al-ṣāliḥīn*).

These points indicate that in these verses, God introduces us to the being of 'Īsā in its essence, starting with the description of '*kalimah min Allāh*', followed by his title, name, and his lineage, which also exposes his gender and proves that he is created only through a female (a mother).<sup>568</sup> The specialness of 'Īsā's title '*kalimah*' indicates God's power to create a thing without any means, place, or time, simply by saying, "Be! And it is."<sup>569</sup> He is handpicked. His mother, and his family, the family of 'Imrān, are also extraordinary because God chose him to be created this way, from a particular virgin daughter from that chosen family.

In *sūrah* Maryam the angel does not mention his name nor title; his name, 'Īsā ibn Maryam only comes later down the story, in verse thirty-five. In that verse, God

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<sup>565</sup> Qur'ān 3:45. Translated as, "[And mention] when the angels said, "O Mary, indeed Allah gives you good tidings of a word from Him, whose name will be the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary - distinguished in this world and the Hereafter and among those brought near [to Allah]."

<sup>566</sup> Qur'ān 3:46. Translated as, "He will speak to the people in the cradle and in maturity and will be of the righteous."

<sup>567</sup> al-Biqā'ī, *Naẓm al-Durar*, 3:399. According to al-Ḥarālī, as quoted by al-Biqā'ī, *al-kuḥūlah* is a fourth of the eighty-four years of human life. To be exact, between forty-one to sixty-two years of age.

<sup>568</sup> Quṭb, *In the Shade of the Qur'ān*, 2:73.

<sup>569</sup> al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī, *Tafsīr al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī*, vol. 1 (Riyādh: Madār al-Waṭan li al-Nashar, 2003), 560-562.

proclaims, "That is 'Īsā ibn Maryam, the word of truth about which they are in dispute...."<sup>570</sup> Nevertheless, in Āli 'Imrān, it is as if God is drawing an image to the listener/reader about 'Īsā's life, from his unparalleled creation, his miracles, and his personality in the future as a prophet from the beginning of the story. By exposing his full title and name, one will be hinted at his future, that he (will be) called *al-Masīh*, who is known to be full of blessings and healing in his touch, and that there is not a single gap on his foot that does not touch the ground when he walks.<sup>571</sup>

Then the verse continues the following four characteristics, which explain his being as the chosen one of God (*al-muṣṭafā*), that he is honorable in the eyes of God (*wajīhan fi al-dunya wa al-ākhirah*), that he will already be addressing the people since infancy and will continue to do so in the *kuhūlah* (late adulthood) period, and that he is righteous (*wa min al-ṣāliḥīn*). Some say that this addressing of people in late adulthood is after his return to earth when the al-Mahdī will have already appeared.<sup>572</sup> Then verses forty-eight to forty-nine confirm his ultimate purpose on earth, that He will be much oriented with the divine books, as a prophet to Banī Isrā'īl: *wa yu'allimuhu al-kitāba wa al-ḥikmata wa al-tawrāta wa al-injīla wa rasūlan ilā banī Isrā'īla*.<sup>573</sup> Verses 49, 50, and 51 then go into detail about what exactly he will do during his prophethood:

- (1) He comes to them as a sign from God by designing a bird from clay for them, which comes to life by breathing into it with God's permission. He also cures the blind and the leper and gives life to the already dead ones with the permission of God, as well as letting them know of their food and what they store in their houses.<sup>574</sup>

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<sup>570</sup> Translation of Qur'ān 19:35.

<sup>571</sup> Al-Aṣḥāhānī, *Tafsīr al-Rāghib*, 1:562-564.

<sup>572</sup> Burhān al-Dīn abī al-Hasan Ibrāhīm al-Biqā'ī, *Naẓm al-Durar fī Tanāsubi al-Āyāti wa al-Suwari*, Vol. 4 (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, 1978), 398, accessed January 14, 2023, <https://archive.org/details/FP3994/ndrr04/page/n398/mode/2up>.

<sup>573</sup> Qur'ān 3:48-49. Translated, "And He will teach him writing and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel, and [make him] a messenger to the Children of Israel..."

<sup>574</sup> Qur'ān 3:49.

- (2) He confirms the Torah and makes lawful those things previously forbidden for the children of *Isra'īl*.<sup>575</sup>

These verses elaborate minutely on the multiple miracles which he performs by the leave of God as *āyāt*<sup>576</sup> from God. The word *āyah* is repeated twenty-four times throughout the whole surah and is an indication of one of the major topics in this *sūrah*.<sup>577</sup> The word 'āyah' itself is mentioned three times within verses 50 to 52; once as *āyatan lakum* and twice as *āyatan min rabbikum* and a total of ten times throughout the *sūrah*. In addition, there is a strong relationship between the beginning and the last part of the *sūrah*, shown by the word *āyāt*. The fourth verse<sup>578</sup>:

مِن قَبْلُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَأَنْزَلَ الْفُرْقَانَ ۚ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ

and the second to last verse of the *sūrah* (verse 199)<sup>579</sup>:

وَإِنَّ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَمَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِمْ خَاشِعِينَ لِلَّهِ لَا يَشْتُرُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

both contain the terms *āyāt Allāh*, but the difference is that the former relates to those who reject them, and the latter relates to those who believe in them. These are all strong indications, aside from the concept of *al-istifā'* mentioned in the previous section, that one of the focal concepts drilled in the *sūrah* is that of the *āyāt* of God.<sup>580</sup>

<sup>575</sup> Qur'ān 3:50.

<sup>576</sup> Usually translated as 'sign' in English.

<sup>577</sup> "Quran Dictionary – أي ي," quran.com, Kais Dukes, 2017,

<https://corpus.quran.com/qurandictionary.jsp?q=Ayy>.

<sup>578</sup> Qur'ān 3:4. Translated as "Before, as guidance for the people. And He revealed the Criterion [i.e., the Qur'ān]. Indeed, those who disbelieve in the verses of Allah will have a severe punishment, and Allah is Exalted in Might, the Owner of Retribution."

<sup>579</sup> Qur'ān 3:199. Translated as "And indeed, among the People of the Scripture are those who believe in Allah and what was revealed to you and what was revealed to them, [being] humbly submissive to Allah. They do not exchange the verses of Allah for a small price. Those will have their reward with their Lord. Indeed, Allah is swift in account."

<sup>580</sup> Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Naḥw Tafsīr Mawḍū'ī li Suwar al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq: 2000), 27.

Returning to the verses about ʿĪsā, the continuation of the narrative portrayed in verses 52, 53, 54, and 55 portray several events towards the end of his life on earth, the betrayal of some of his followers, and God's rescue from their plot by lifting him to heaven.<sup>581</sup> Thus these are all portrayals of his significant being as a messenger of God.

These all connect strongly to the main topic determined from the narrative of Maryam, the mother of ʿĪsā, in the previous section, which was the concept of *al-iṣṭifāʾ* of God for the family of ʿĪmrān as part of a long line of prophets. Therefore, the narrative of ʿĪsā also supports this theme. The concept of *raḥmah* in this part of the narrative manifests in God's generosity towards both prophet ʿĪsā and his soon-to-be followers. The fact that his creation was unusual and that he chose him amongst a billion other souls in this universe is a divine *raḥmah* in itself. Consequently, his appointment as a *rasūl* for Banī Isrāʾīl and the many miracles that God permits him to do are all divine *raḥmah* from Him, as every single *rasūl* is a *raḥmah* for his people,<sup>582</sup> and *muʿjizāt* are only given to special people for a particular purpose. As a *rasūl*, he guides his followers and makes their affairs easier because, with his new appointment, some unlawful things become lawful. His *muʿjizāt*, *āyāt*, or signs from God, guide people into believing in the straight path again while giving ease and a great relief to those who need them.

These are all manifestations of *al-raḥmah* in this part of the narratives of prophet ʿĪsā; however, the verses do not indicate the concept of *al-rahmah* directly, and the word *al-raḥmah* does not appear in them. Other themes such as *al-iṣṭifāʾ*, *al-āyāt*, and the being of ʿĪsā as a *rasūl* are more prevalent as contexts.

#### **4.3.2. Al-Raḥmah in the Story of ʿĪsā in Sūrah Maryam**

Sūrah Maryam, on the other hand, elaborates significantly on the miraculous events of ʿĪsā's conception, his birth, and his being as a remarkable son for an extraordinary mother.

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<sup>581</sup> Qurʾān 19:52-55.

<sup>582</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʾ al-Bayān*,

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=1&tSoraNo=43&tAyahNo=32&tDisplay=yes&Page=2&Size=1&LanguageId=1>.

The narration starts with verse twenty-two when God portrays Maryam being pregnant with 'Īsā and retreats to a faraway place, *faḥamalathu fantabadhat bihi makānan qaṣiyyā*.<sup>583</sup> The subsequent verses then depict the vivid incidences throughout the delivery experience, both in feelings and physical portrayals, where the reader both feels the pain and worries that Maryam was experiencing at the time and God's help and mercy towards her throughout the event. Verse twenty-three continues: *fa ajā'ahā almakhādu ilā jidh'i al-nakhlati, qālat yā laytanī mittu qabla hādha wa kuntu nasyan mansiyyā*<sup>584</sup>.

As seen above, Maryam's emotions unfold during the delivery process. These segments of the *sūrah* vividly show the answers to Maryam's plea.<sup>585</sup> "*yā laytanī mittu qabla hādha wa kuntu nasyan mansiyyā*". This expression is often also said by the *sāliḥūn* when subjected to the pangs of trials and tribulations.<sup>586</sup> However, God does not leave her in vain; He pours her his divine love and *rahmah* by sending her some instructions: '*fa nādāhā min tahtihā allā taḥzanī qad ja'ala rabbuki taḥtaki sariyyā*'.<sup>587</sup> The usages of these terms denote comfort, assurance, and protection. The usage of the word *Rabbuki*, your *Rabb*, instead of the *ism jalālah*, Allāh, signifies a more personal relationship. In the Arabic language, *al-Rabb* signifies *al-Mālik*; the owner, *al-sayyid*; the master and leader, *al-Mudabbir*; the planner, *al-Murabbī*; the one who nurtures, *al-Qayyim*; the caretaker, *al-Mun'im*; the one who bestows grace and blessings.<sup>588</sup> Comprehensively, the word *rabb* does not only contain the idea of fostering, but also that of regulating, cherishing, accomplishing, sustaining, and bringing to maturity and perfection.<sup>589</sup> This definition relates congruently to God's *rahmah* upon her by creating a stream underneath her (or underneath the date tree, according to some opinions) for her to drink. This way, her sadness will diminish. *Lā taḥzanī (yā Maryam), do not worry about your loneliness, the*

<sup>583</sup> Qur'ān 19:22.

<sup>584</sup> Qur'ān 19:23. Translated as "And the pains of childbirth drove her to the palm tree trunk. She said, "Oh, I wish I had died before this and was in oblivion, forgotten..."

<sup>585</sup> Qur'ān 19:23.

<sup>586</sup> Al-Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-Rāzī*, <https://tafsir.app/alrazi/19/23>); Abū Ḥayyān, *al-Bahr al-Muḥīṭ*, (<https://tafsir.app/albahr-almuheet/19/23>).

<sup>587</sup> Qur'ān 19:24.

<sup>588</sup> Ibn Manẓūr, s.v. "رب", *Lisān al-'Arab*, 1546, accessed Nov. 2, 2021, <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#la=1546>.

<sup>589</sup> Malik Ghulam Farid, s.v. "رب", *DICTIONARY OF THE HOLY QUR'AN with References and Explanation of the Text*, Surrey: Islam International Publications Limited, 2006, 306-307, accessed November 2, 2021, PDF.

*absence of food and drink, and what will happen when people see you!*<sup>590</sup> This gesture is, therefore, a sign of love and mercy - of *rahmah*; just like a mother comforting and consoling an upset child, sometimes she offers the child to drink some water for him or her to calm down.

Verse twenty-five then depicts the fact that Maryam's Rabb, God the al-Mighty, is still taking care of her affairs by directing her on how to alleviate her troubles at the time; by asking her to shake the trunk of the date tree on which she was resting under so that fresh ripe dates (*ruṭab janiyyā*) would easily fall upon her.<sup>591</sup> She can then readily gain strength by consuming them. Many scholars believe that Maryam's shaking of a date trunk whereby fresh ripe dates fall is an enormous *rahmah* and miracle itself. Several sources narrate<sup>592</sup> that the date palm was old and dry, and it was winter when dates are usually not in season.<sup>593</sup> Secondly, dates do not usually drop simply by hand-shaking their trunk. Dates trunks are robust and sturdy because of their deep roots, and generally, a mechanical vibrator is used in date farms to harvest their fruits by installing them on the trunk to make a shaking motion.<sup>594</sup> How can someone who is in the middle of the pain of labor (*al-makhḥāḍ*) able to shake a date palm, let alone strong enough to make its ripe fruits fall towards her? Thus the miracle and happiness which Maryam felt after the fall of the fruits and the availability of fresh water in a place and time where the two seem to be out of the question is not simply because of the food and drink themselves per se, but by witnessing all of these mu'jizāt given to her. The inability of a dry and old date palm in the middle of a desert in the wintertime is like the impossibility of a pregnancy without a male partner.

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<sup>590</sup> al-Nafasī, *Tafsīr Madārik al-Tanzīl wa Ḥaqāiq al-Ta'wīl*, altafsir.com, Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2021, <https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=17&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=24&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>591</sup> Qur'ān 19:25

<sup>592</sup> In Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, al-Bayḍhāwī, and al-Zamakhsharī amongst the many.

Al-Zamakhsharī, Tafsīr al-Kashshāf,

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=2&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=23&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>

<sup>593</sup> Al-Qunawī and al-Ḥanafī, *Hāshīyah al-Qunawī*, 6:218-219.

<sup>594</sup> GeotyLtd, "Harvesting Medjool dates by shaking." Geoty Ltd. Agricultural Net, October 17, 2010, YouTube video, 7:33, <https://youtu.be/05n3U95e7PY>.

However, these events demonstrate that God's will and actions do not require a means. Thus confirming that these odd happenings align with her also supranormal pregnancy.<sup>595</sup>

At last, in verse twenty-six: *fa kulī wa ishrabī wa qarrī 'aynā fa immā tarayinna mina al-bashari aḥadan faqūli innī nadhartu li al-rahmāni ṣawman falan ukallima al-yawma insiyyā*<sup>596</sup>

God gives her the final relief not only for the current pain and discomfort she is in by asking her to eat fresh dates and drinking fresh flowing water *fa kulī wa ishrabī wa qarrī 'aynā*<sup>597</sup>, but also by assuring her worries about possible people's accusations when they see her with the newborn child without a husband. God says, *fa immā tarayinna min al-bashari aḥadan faqūli innī nadhartu li al-rahmāni ṣawman fa lan ukallima al-yawma insiyyā*<sup>598</sup> (And if you see from among humanity anyone, say, 'Indeed, I have vowed to the Most Merciful abstention, so I will not speak today to [any] man). She does not have to speak to them to explain anything, and, as mentioned in the few subsequent verses, her newborn will speak for her as both a sign from God to those who witness and as a defense on her behalf. Just as God has always been taking care of her since birth by nurturing her directly and giving her food directly from him during worship at the miḥrāb,<sup>599</sup> He also provides for and takes care of her directly during this event. All as an expression of His special *rahmah*<sup>600</sup>.

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<sup>595</sup> Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*,

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=2&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=24&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>; see also Al-Qunawī and al-Ḥanafī, *Ḥāshīyyah al-Qunawī*, 6: 219.

<sup>596</sup> Qur'ān 19:26. Translated as "So eat and drink and be contented. And if you see from among humanity anyone, say, 'Indeed, I have vowed to the Most Merciful abstention, so I will not speak today to [any] man.'"

<sup>597</sup> Ibn 'Ajībah, *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Madīd fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Majīd* [The Outstretched Ocean in the Interpretation of the Glorious Qur'ān], [altafsir.com](https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=3&tTafsirNo=37&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=28&tDisplay=yes&Page=2&Size=1&LanguageId=1), Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2021, <https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=3&tTafsirNo=37&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=28&tDisplay=yes&Page=2&Size=1&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>598</sup> Qur'ān 19:26. (فَكُلِي وَأَشْرَبِي وَفَرِي عَيْنًا فَاِيمًا تَرِي مِّنَ الْبَشَرِ أَحَدًا فَقُولِي إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ صَوْمًا فَلَنْ أُكَلِّمَ الْيَوْمَ إِنْسِيًّا).

<sup>599</sup> Qur'ān 3:37.

<sup>600</sup> Aḥmad Muḥammad al-Sharqawī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī li Sūrah Maryam* [Thematic Interpretation of Chapter 'Maryam'] ([No place], Jāmi'ah al-Shāriqah: 2007), 24.

#### 4.3.2.1. Raḥmah of God for Maryam While Facing the People

The story continues in verses 27 to 29 in *sūrah* Maryam with Maryam returning from labor and facing the people. The verses vividly exhibit the reactions of the people and their remarks towards Maryam's reaction as directed by God;

(٢٧) فَأَنْتَ بِهِ قَوْمَهَا تَحْمِلُهُۥ ۗ قَالُوا يَا مَرْيَمُ لَقَدْ جِئْتِ شَيْئًا فَرِيًّا

*fa atat bihī qawmahā taḥmiluhu,*

(Then she brought him to her people, carrying him).

*Qālū yā Maryamu laqod ji'ta shai'an fariyyā,*

(They said, "O Mary, you have certainly done a thing unprecedented).

(٢٨) يَا أُخْتَ هَارُونَ مَا كَانَ أَبُوكِ امْرَأَ سَوْءٍ وَمَا كَانَتْ أُمُّكَ بَعْثًا

*Yā ukhtā hārūna mā kāna abūki imra'ā saw'in wamā kānat ummuki baghiyyā*

(O sister of Aaron, your father was not a man of evil, nor was your mother unchaste).

(٢٩) فَأَشَارَتْ إِلَيْهِ ۗ قَالُوا كَيْفَ نُكَلِّمُ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الْمَهْدِ صَبِيًّا

*fa ashārat ilaiḥ Qālū kaiḥa nukallimu man kāna fi al-mahdi ṣabiyyā,*

(So she pointed to him. They said, "How can we speak to one who is in the cradle a child?").

As the verses continue, the infant prophet ʿĪsā starts to speak on behalf of his mother. The Qurʾān remains quiet about how old exactly prophet ʿĪsā was when the incident happened, whether fresh after birth or a few months after. Ibn ʿĀshūr quoted that the gospel Luke mentioned that Maryam remained secluded from the people until forty-one days after childbirth when she was cleared from al-nifās.<sup>601</sup> Even if the incident happened a few months after birth, it is still extraordinary that the infant can speak coherent sentences. This rare occurrence is a *raḥmah* for her mother especially sent by God, as this incident completely negates all possible false claims that the people at that time would accuse Maryam of doing. The possibility of an infant speaking like so is generally zero, let alone speaking a lie. The motor, nervous, and coordinating systems in infancy have not yet

<sup>601</sup> Ibn ʿĀshūr, *al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*,

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=54&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=27&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.

developed fully, thus disabling them from uttering letters. Hence, how can they possibly speak words and sentences? One study discusses that early spontaneous speech in infancy starts between the age of one to three years of age only.<sup>602</sup> Furthermore, even if one could speak, can an infant differentiate between truth and lie to create one in the first place? And if one claims that someone else tells the infant to imitate what he or she says to the infant, can the infant understand the instructions to imitate someone's words? Finally, even if one states that the devil can whisper to the infant to influence the baby, it is incompetent at coercing the infant's under-develop motor and nervous system to become ready to speak.

This impossibility can only turn otherwise when the cause and effect processes are negated, thus a possible happening without an ordinary way, where the cause and effect system does not exist anymore, just like the birth of a child without the interference of a man, just like an infant speaking the adult language.

Thus this miracle that happened to Maryam is a divine *rahmah*, to say the least, because only he can initiate and commission it, and nothing and no one else. This solid proof indicates that what the child says, therefore, cannot be a lie. It is a special *rahmah* for Maryam as it saves her from their horrendous accusation of adultery.

The story unfolds further, showing how the infant 'Īsā spoke about himself and who he was. At this point, it is helpful to see *sūrah* Maryam's and Ālī 'Īmrān's explanations concerning who Prophet 'Īsā was and to note what related themes each surah carries for prophet 'Īsā's personality. The following section will focus only on *sūrah* Maryam, as Section 4.3.2. already elaborated the discussion on 'Īsā's personas in *sūrah* Āli 'Īmrān.

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<sup>602</sup> Bowerman, Melissa, and Soonja Choi. "Shaping Meanings for Language: Universal and Language-Specific in the Acquisition of Spatial Semantic Categories" chapter, in *Language Acquisition and Conceptual Development*, edited by Melissa Bowerman and Stephen Levinson, *Language Culture and Cognition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 487, doi:10.1017/CBO9780511620669.018.

#### 4.3.2.2. God's Raḥmah Manifested in the Infant 'Īsā

When the infant 'Īsā's miraculous ability defends her mother's wrongful accusations by the Banī 'Isrā'īl at that time, God exposes the real identity of Prophet 'Īsā. As the respected verses unfold, they also negate the notion that he is the son of God. In this *sūrah*, 'Īsā speaks for himself, and the first pronoun, 'I,' is used throughout.

The narration starts with verse thirty, where the infant blatantly opens his speech by asserting his first and most crucial identity; *innī 'abdu Allāh* (Indeed I am a slave of Allāh), that he is only a servant of God, negating the notion that He is the son of God: *Qāla innī 'abdu Allāhi wa ātāniya al-kitāba wa ja 'alanī nabīyyā*<sup>603</sup>.

Like every slave, he is subjected and has submitted to everything His Lord decrees. Secondly, *ātāniya al-kitāb* (He gave me the book), that He gave him the Injīl for him to understand and to convey to others. Thirdly, *wa ja 'alanī nabīyyā* (and He made me a prophet), God made him a prophet towards Banī 'Isrā'īl. The word nabīy (including its plural form, *anbiyā'*) is repeated eight times in this *sūrah*. According to al-Rāghib al-Asfahānī in his *Mufradāt*, the word al-Nubuwwah means<sup>604</sup>: سفارة بين الله و بين ذوي العقول من: عباده لإزاحة علتهم في أمر معادهم و معاشهم لكونه منبئاً بما تسكن إليه العقول الذكية, a mediation between God and the brilliants amongst his slaves in order to solve whatever issues that may come in their lives in this world and the next. He added the word nabīy thus must therefore convey (whatever information he receives from God) in a way that his brilliant mind permits, لكونه منبئاً بما تسكن إليه العقول الذكية. The term can also derive from both al-*nabwah*, a highly raised ground, and al-*naba'*, an important news. Therefore, a nabīy has high status because he carries important news from God by which mankind will obtain great benefits and by which he guides them.<sup>605</sup>. Having mentioned these nobilities, they can only further support Maryam's fidelity and

<sup>603</sup> Qur'ān 19:30. As the verse says, "قَالَ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ ءَاتَانِي الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا", which means, "[Jesus] said, "Indeed, I am the servant of Allah. He has given me the Scripture and made me a prophet".

<sup>604</sup> Al-Aṣfahānī, s.v. "نبي" in *Al-Mufradāt*, <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#amr=622>.

<sup>605</sup> Quraish Shihab, s.v. "نبوة" in *Ensiklopedia Al-Quran: Kajian Kosa Kata, Quraish Shihab* [Encyclopedia of the Qur'ān, A Study in Vocabulary], Arabic Almanac v6.1, Mawrid Reader v3.1, accessed January 14, 2023, <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#ens=729>; Ibn Manzūr. s.v. "دعا", in *Lisān al-'Arab*, <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#la=4333>.

purity, that it does not befit a slave and Nabī Allāh to be born as a result of an act of adultery (*al-zinā*)<sup>606</sup>.

As infant `Īsā's speech continues in verse thirty-one, he stresses further how God has made him blessed where ever he may be and that God himself has enjoined him with *al-ṣalaḥ* and *al-zakah* all of his life, *wa ja'alanī mubārakān ayna mā kuntu wa awṣānī bi al-ṣalāh wa al-zakah ma dumtu hayyā*. (*And He has made me blessed wherever I am and has enjoined upon me prayer and zakāh as long as I remain alive.*)<sup>607</sup>

A connection between this verse and the previous one is that as an *'abd* of God and his *nabī*, he blessed where ever he may be. As further proof, God bequeaths him with *'ibādāh*, especially *al-ṣalāh*, the obligatory prayers, and *al-zakāh* for the rest of his life, to give obligatory alms. These commands do not befit a son of God, if there were one, because he is also supposedly God. The term *mā dumtu hayyā* here also signifies that he is human and will only live on this earth for a specified period of time.

The word *mubārak* comes in the Qur'ān twelve times;<sup>608</sup> four times describing the Qur'ān (either as *kitāb* or *dhikr*),<sup>609</sup> and single occurrences describing the following words: the city Makkah (*Bakkah mubārakah*),<sup>610</sup> blessed night of qadar (*lailah mubārakah*),<sup>611</sup> a place (*manzilan mubārak*),<sup>612</sup> a tree (*shajarah mubārakah*),<sup>613</sup> a greeting (*tahiyyāh mubārakah*),<sup>614</sup> a valley (*al-buq'ah al-mubārakah*),<sup>615</sup> rain (*al-mā` al-mubārak*),<sup>616</sup> and lastly, in this *sūrah*, as one of the blessed personalities of `Īsā.<sup>617</sup> The word *mubārak*

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<sup>606</sup> Ismā`il Haqqī, *Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Bayān*,

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=3&tTafsirNo=36&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=30&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>607</sup> Qur'ān 19:31.

<sup>608</sup> "Search Result," Tanzil.net, Tanzil, 2007-2023, <https://tanzil.net/#search/quran/مبارك>.

<sup>609</sup> Qur'ān 6:92, 6:155, 21:50, 38:29.

<sup>610</sup> Qur'ān 3:96.

<sup>611</sup> Qur'ān 44:3.

<sup>612</sup> Qur'ān 23:29.

<sup>613</sup> Qur'ān 24:35.

<sup>614</sup> Qur'ān 24:61.

<sup>615</sup> Qur'ān 28:30.

<sup>616</sup> Qur'ān 50:9.

<sup>617</sup> Qur'ān 19:31.

carries the meaning of something which intrinsically contains al-barakah, of abundance goodness that comes from God (*al-khair al-ilāhī*)<sup>618</sup> It also signifies something with firm, steady, continuous, over-flowing, extensive, and exalted.<sup>619</sup>

Prophet 'Īsā's *mubārak* state in every place (*ayna mā kuntu*), thus, consequently emanates this type of blessing where ever he steps foot upon. Everything he touches will be affected considerably by this blessed goodness, the land he is in, the earth he steps on, the air he breathes, and the messages that he conveys to the people, and thus, these blessings affect all human beings he is in touch with including the averting of tribulations from them.<sup>620</sup> Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī compiled several meanings to the *al-barakah* that 'Īsā carries with him, including the meanings of 'enjoining goods and prohibiting evil,' being beneficial to others and teaching others to do good themselves<sup>621</sup>. Al-Qushairī (d. 465/1072), in his *al-Laṭā'if*, includes 'Īsā's various miracles (as mentioned in *sūrah* Āli 'Imrān)<sup>622</sup> as a big part of the '*al-barakah*' he is gifted from God and bestows upon people.<sup>623</sup>

Keeping the above discussions in mind, how does one connotate the meanings of the word *mubārak* and the nuance of divine *raḥmah* in this case? As discussed previously, the word *raḥmah* in the story of Maryam comes as one of the reasons for the miraculous creation of 'Īsā (or the being of 'Īsā himself).<sup>624</sup> This *raḥmah*, therefore, will affect either his mother, Maryam, the people who follow him, or both. From this verse, which exposes the *mubārak* being of Prophet 'Īsā, an indirect relationship can be drawn out by the fact that prophet 'Īsā is a *raḥmah* from God to both *his mother* and *the people*. It is a *raḥmah* for

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<sup>618</sup> Al-Aṣḥāhānī, s.v. “برك”, in *Al-Mufradāt*, <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#amr=55>.

<sup>619</sup> 'Abdul Mannān 'Omar, s.v. “برك”, in *Dictionary of the Holy Qur'ān Arabic Words – English Meanings*, Arabic Almanac v6.1, Mawrid Reader v3.1, accessed January 14, 2023, <https://ejtaal.net/aa/#dhq=50>.

<sup>620</sup> Al-Baqlī, *Tafsīr 'Arā'is al-Bayān fī Ḥaqā'iqi al-Qur'ān* [Exegesis of 'The Brides of Clarification and Explanation in the Realities of the Qur'ān], Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2008. 3:459-460.

<sup>621</sup> See Al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf*, <https://tafsir.app/kashaf/19/31>. As mentioned in *al-Kashshāf* by al-Zamakhsharī (537 H), in a hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah, “*Naffā'an haythu kuntu*”, and Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, <https://tafsir.app/tabari/19/31>.

<sup>622</sup> Qur'ān 3:46-50.

<sup>623</sup> Abū Al Qāsim Al-Qushairī, *Tafsīr Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt* [Subtlety of Signs], [altafsir.com](https://www.altafsir.com), Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought, 2021, <https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=3&tTafsirNo=31&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=31&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>.

<sup>624</sup> Qur'ān 19:21.

Maryam to be gifted with a *mubārak* child by God because a *mubārak* child the like of prophet 'Īsā will bring increased joy and goodness to the mother and the people around her. A *mubārak* child will increase the quality of life for the people and his family. Gifting a *mubārak* child to a parent is an act of *rahmah* of God because it is a merciful and loving act as He will give them a lot of ease and benefits that are ever increasing. Thus, the child will lessen any work needed from the family and the people. As a mother will always be full of *rahmah* towards a child, she will always try to act accordingly so that the child will be happy, prosperous, and at ease throughout his life. Like so, God bestows *al-rahmah* to some people by granting them a child full of barakah to ease their lives and make their lives *mubārak*.

After God attests to 'Īsā's *mubārak*'s state, He continues with more noble characters of 'Īsā. This time they are almost a mirror image of those personas of prophet Yaḥyā, as was discussed in another section of this study. 'Īsā's words continue to describe himself in the subsequent two verses:<sup>625</sup> *wa barran biwālidatī wa lam yaj 'alnī jabbāran shaqiyyā*<sup>626</sup> *wa al-salāmu 'alā yawma wulittu wa yawma amūtu wa yawma ub 'athu ḥayyā*<sup>627</sup> He mentions those characteristics as slightly different than those of Yaḥyā. First, 'Īsā serves only his mother as a parent, while prophet Yaḥyā has both parents. Here he is portrayed as someone who is not *jabbāran 'aṣiyyā*, but *jabbāran shaqiyyā*, instead. Lastly, prophet 'Īsā's *salām* is *mu`arraḥ*, definite, while in the case of prophet Yaḥyā, it is *nākirah*, signifying indefiniteness.

Some say that indefiniteness comes higher than definiteness, thus indicating a preference towards Yaḥyā. However, the definiteness of the word *salām* here is because it is 'Īsā himself who says it, while in the case of prophet Yaḥyā, it was God that mentioned it. Thus, the *salām* expressed in the *nakirah* form is more unlimited than when it is definite with a *lām al-ta'rīf*.

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<sup>625</sup> Qur'ān 19:32-33.

<sup>626</sup> And [made me] dutiful to my mother, and He has not made me a wretched tyrant. (Translated).

<sup>627</sup> And peace is on me the day I was born, and the day I will die, and the day I am raised alive." (Translated).

#### 4.4. Summary and Results

Both sūrah Maryam and Āli ‘Imrān relate the discourse of Maryam and her son ‘Īsā in detail. As was concluded in the previous chapter covering the narrative of Zakariyyā and Yaḥyā, the leading theme and nuance of *al-iṣṭifā* overwhelms their narratives in sūrah Āli ‘Imrān. With this *al-iṣṭifā*, God accepts Hannāh's vow, raises Maryam Himself, provides her with sustenance directly from Him, and chooses her to be the only female receiving an angel messenger. He also selects her for Himself above all women in the universe, expressed by the two-time repeat of the word *'iṣṭafāki* directed to her in a particular verse, purifying her so that she maintains innocence throughout her life. Through this distinctive preference, God also commanded her exclusively certain worship undertakings. She was also to carry in her womb a great prophet albeit her virginity. The narrative then progresses to focus on the personalities and miracles of ‘Īsā as an adult prophet or what he will be in the future. Their account in sūrah Maryam starts with Maryam's miraculous impregnation with the soon-to-be prophet and continues with his birth and his notable divine personas and miracles during infancy. God's *raḥmah* as a central theme emerges, as mentioned earlier in this section. Further, God specifically and openly mentions ‘Īsā as a *raḥmah* from Him, exhibiting divine *al-raḥmah* as primary nuance.

Unlike in the story of Zakariyyā, the opening verse of her story here does not have the word *al-raḥmah* explicitly proclaimed. This word can be found a few verses after instead, as one of the reasons why God sent ‘Īsā,<sup>628</sup> *raḥmatan minnā*, as a *raḥmah* from God. However, other explicit and implicit signs of *al-raḥmah* exist abundantly throughout the narrative verses. They also depict the roles of both Maryam and ‘Īsā' in the flow of *al-raḥmah* from God, namely being slaves (*al-‘ibād*) of *al-Raḥmān*, who is their Lord (*al-Rabb*) - the giver of *al-raḥmah*.

The two crucial notions which shape the concept of divine *al-raḥmah* from the viewpoints of giving and receiving also exist in their accounts. The seeking of *al-raḥmah* (*al-istirḥām*) appears in Maryam's implore of God by his name *al-Raḥmān* during the angel's

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<sup>628</sup> Qur'ān 19:21. "...*wa linaj'alahū āyatan li al-nāsi wa raḥmatan minnā.*"

visit. The act of God's endowment of *al-rahmah* (*al-tarraḥḥum*) can shine in the glad tidings (*bishārah*) the angel delivers to Maryam of a young boy (*ghulām*), in God's sending of this boy as a *rahmah* specifically from Him both to his mother and to the people, His help throughout Maryam's child-bearing process and during her ordeal with people who falsely accuse her of adultery (by letting her infant 'Īsā speak on her behalf).

God's gestures to Maryam throughout many discourses in her narrative here, be it by way of the miraculous conception and birth of her son 'Īsā itself or God's comprehensive ways of aid and support throughout the story, emanate values that are parallel to the basic definitions of *al-rahmah*. Amongst these are in the usage of the word *hayyin* (easy) in the reply of the angel in Maryam's amazement of the glad tidings of a son, in the usage of the name of God '*al-Raḥmān*' in her beseeching, and in God's instruction to Maryam on how to address the people. More than this, the expressions of *lā taḥzanī* (do not be sad), *fa kulī wa ishrabī wa qarrī aynā* (so eat, drink, and rejoice your heart), alongside with the creation of a fresh stream underneath her during labor alludes to the attributes of gentleness, ease, love, the will to alleviate pain, giving comfort and facilitation, and being perfect in doing so (*al-iḥsān*), all of which inherent to the primary characters of divine *al-Raḥmah*.

Alongside this, 'Īsā's nature portrays the essential components of *al-rahmah*, just as Yaḥyā's. *Barran bi al-wālidātī* (being entirely devoted towards his mother), *lam akun jabbāran shaqiyā* (not rude, rebellious, and stubborn), being *mubārak* (overflowing with blessings and goodness) and having *al-salām* (peacefulness) in the three most difficult times of life all gestures towards of *al-rahmah*.

However, the most beautiful and significant projection of *al-rahmah* in the story of Maryam comes subtly. Maryam's devotion to God as an *amah* and her undying '*iffah* was not without sacrifice. At a time when the prestige of being a woman lay in her contribution to building society as a wife and mother, she chose to remain unmarried for the sake of serving God and God alone. This exemplary gesture deserves her to be gifted with the ability to conceive a child without any touch of men (*hibah of 'Īsā*), giving her the pleasure and right to be a mother while preserving her pureness and virginity. This act is a

*mu'jizah*, a miracle from God, and a special divine *rahmah* in so many different ways. Being a mother grants every woman the completeness of self, playing a vital role in the upbringing of a child as part of preserving lineage and progeny, but being a virgin mother to a prophet who will change the world provides a woman another level of completeness. God allowed her to play an essential role in expressing the essence of His being *al-Rahmān*, the will, and action of creating and preserving long lines of life.

More than this, the verses here illustrate how her son 'Īsā carries *al-rahmah* in his being, both as a devoted righteous child and a prophet, like Yaḥyā. The following tables will decipher and elaborate all of the above discourse in more detail, illustrating the components and modalities of *al-rahmah* in the narratives of Maryam and 'Īsa in *sūrah* Maryam, along with their characteristics and actions.

**Table 4.1. Key Players and Components of *al-Raḥmah* in the Story of Maryam and ʿĪsā**

<p><b>God as the Lord (<i>al-Rabb</i>) and as <i>al-Raḥmān</i></b></p>	<p><b>Maryam as a Slave (<i>al-amah</i>)</b></p>	<p><b>ʿĪsā as a Slave (<i>al-ʿabd</i>)</b></p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Expressing special favors to Lady Maryam and ʿĪsā</li> <li>2. Establishing <i>rubūbiyyah</i> by:</li> <li>3. Expressing special favors to Lady Maryam and ʿĪsā</li> <li>4. Establishing <i>rubūbiyyah</i> by:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Being the Rabb of Maryam and ʿĪsā<sup>629</sup> Expressing ease in the creation of ʿĪsā, that it is an <i>amr maqḍīy</i> (a done matter)<sup>630</sup></li> <li>b. Sending ʿĪsā as a sign (from Him) for people and a <i>raḥmah</i> from God himself.<sup>631</sup></li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Guarded her chastity by secluding herself<sup>632</sup></li> <li>2. Guarding her virginity, a woman with <i>ʿiffah</i><sup>633</sup></li> <li>3. Obedient to God's instructions, faces people with courage<sup>634</sup></li> <li>4. A human being with human expectations<sup>635</sup>:</li> <li>5. Never expecting a child.</li> <li>6. Almost denying the birth of her child.</li> <li>7. An <i>ʿabd</i> as a human being weak during hardships:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <sup>636</sup> Expresses sorrow during labor.</li> <li>b. Uses expressions of regret.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Confessing that he is an <i>ʿabd</i> of God (<i>innī ʿabdullāh</i>) in infancy.<sup>637</sup></li> <li>2. Born as a special son to an extraordinary mother, created without the regular means of conception.<sup>638</sup></li> <li>3. Defending his parent by proving her innocence to people.<sup>639</sup></li> <li>4. Sent by God as a prophet to Banī Isrāʾīl.<sup>640</sup></li> </ol>

<sup>629</sup> Expressed in the verse when the angel addresses her and uses the word '*rabbuki*' (your Rabb) referring to God in verses 19:19 (*innamā anā rasūlu rabbiki*) and 19:21 (*Qāla rabbuki huwa ʿalayya hayyin*) and ʿĪsā stating that, he is an *ʿabd* of Allāh (a slave of God), in verse 19:30 (*innī ʿabdu Allāh*) and 19:36 (*wa inna Allāha rabbī wa rabbukum*).

<sup>630</sup> Qurʿān 19:21 (...*Qāla rabbuki huwa ʿalayya hayyin...wa kāna amran maqḍīyyā...*)

<sup>631</sup> Ibid., "... *li najʿalahu āyatan li al-nāsi wa raḥmatan minnā...*"

<sup>632</sup> Qurʿān 19:16, "*idh intabadhat min ahlihā makānan sharqiyyā...*" and 19:17, "*fa ittakhadhat min dūnihim ḥijāban...*"

<sup>633</sup> Qurʿān 19:18, when she sought protection from God from the man-like angel, "...*innī aʿūdhu bi al-Raḥmān minka in kunta taqiyyā...*" and Qurʿān 19:20, "...*wa lam yamsasnī basharun wa lam aku baghiyyā...*"

<sup>634</sup> Qurʿān 19:29, "...*fa ashārat ilaih...*"

<sup>635</sup> Qurʿān 19:20, "...*annā yakūnu lī ghulāmun....?*"

<sup>636</sup> Qurʿān 19:23, "...*qālat yā laytanī mittu qabla hādihā wa kuntu nasyan mansiyyā...*" and in verse 19:24 where the voice consoles her, "...*lā taḥzanī...*" indicating that she was in sorrow.

<sup>637</sup> Qurʿān 19:30.

<sup>638</sup> Qurʿān 19:34-35.

<sup>639</sup> Qurʿān 19:30-33, when he was addressing the people.

<sup>640</sup> Qurʿān 19:30.

**Table 4.1. (cont.)**

<p>c. Proving through the birth of `Īsā of his majestic ability, He is exalted from having a child.</p> <p>d. Providing help and comfort to Maryam during hardship through His particular ways.<sup>641</sup>.</p> <p>5. Establishing <i>mu'jizāt</i> and <i>karāmah</i> to specially chosen people (in this case, Maryam and `Īsā)</p>	<p>c. Expresses sorrow during labor.</p> <p>d. Uses expressions of regret.</p> <p>8. A mother to a child created without a father.<sup>642</sup>.</p>	
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<sup>641</sup> Qur`ān 19:24-26. When she was in labor, God guided her to ease her pain by shaking the palm tree and giving water to her from underneath. Also, in verse 19:30-36, by the speech of baby `Īsā against the accusations of the people.

<sup>642</sup> Qur`ān 19:22, 23, 27.

**Table 4.2. Manifestations of al-Raḥmah by God as al-Rabb in the  
Story of Maryam and ʿĪsā**

God's <i>Raḥmah</i> to Maryam	God's <i>Raḥmah</i> to ʿĪsā	God's <i>Raḥmah</i> to the People
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The <i>hibah</i> of a child without having to go through the technicality of consummations, thus maintaining her purity and virginity.</li> <li>2. The <i>hibah</i> of a child with many miracles (<i>karāmah</i> and <i>muʿjizāt</i>) and divine attributes, a prophet.</li> <li>3. Saving and taking care of Maryam during hardship portrayed in this particular <i>sūrah</i>, such as the pregnancy and delivery of ʿĪsā and the accusation of her people upon being familiarized with her delivery.</li> <li>4. Choosing especially her to deliver God's <i>kalimah</i> (ʿĪsā), granting her motherhood to a prophet of God.</li> <li>5. Through the birth of ʿĪsā raises her name and rank</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creating him as a prophet of God.</li> <li>2. Establishing <i>muʿjizāt</i> in ʿĪsā.</li> <li>3. Granting him divine characteristics: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Being pure (<i>Zakīy</i>).</li> <li>b. Being obedient and soft, not stubborn and rude<sup>643</sup>.</li> <li>c. Barr to his mother (extremely devoted)<sup>644</sup>.</li> <li>d. Being perseverant in <i>ʿubūdiyyah</i> (in <i>al-shalah</i> and <i>al-zakah</i>)<sup>645</sup></li> <li>e. Granting peace in the three most harrowing periods of life: day of birth, day of death, day of being resurrected<sup>646</sup>.</li> <li>f. Granting ʿĪsā abundance of blessings (<i>barakah</i>), those he possesses and those he emits to others (<i>mubāarak</i>).<sup>647</sup>.</li> </ol> </li> <li>4. Appointing as his parent the best woman in the universe.</li> </ol>	<p>Sending them guidance for salvation through Prophet ʿĪsā<sup>648</sup></p>

<sup>643</sup> Qurʿān 19:32, “*wa lam yajʿalnī jabbāran shaqiyyā...*”

<sup>644</sup> Ibid., “*wa barran bi wālidatī...*”

<sup>645</sup> Qurʿān 19:31, “*...mā dumtu hayyā*” indicating his perseverance in this matter.

<sup>646</sup> Qurʿān 19:33.

<sup>647</sup> Qurʿān 19:31.

<sup>648</sup> Qurʿān 19:21, “*...li najʿalahū āyatan li al-nāsi wa raḥmatan minnā...*”

**Table 4.3. Nature of *al-Raḥmah* of God as *al-Rabb* in the  
Story of Maryam and 'Īsā**

<b>Nature of <i>al-Raḥmah</i></b>		
<b>To Maryam</b>	<b>To 'Īsā</b>	<b>To the People</b>
<p>God expressing his ṣifah of <i>al-Raḥmān</i> to Maryam:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creating - in this case, without normal means</li> <li>2. Creating righteous kinship</li> <li>3. Equipping the <i>marḥūmūn</i> with necessities to carry out her new life (including protecting her esteem)</li> </ol>	<p>God expressing his attribute as <i>al-Raḥmān</i> to 'Īsā:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creating - in this case, without normal means</li> <li>2. Creating righteous child/kinship</li> <li>3. Equipping the <i>marḥūm</i> with necessities to carry out his new life</li> <li>4. Embellishing whom so ever he wishes with divine characteristics</li> </ol>	<p><i>Al-raḥmah</i> of guidance</p>

## CHAPTER V

### A COMPARISON: AL-RAḤMAH IN THE NARRATIVE ACCOUNTS OF IBRĀHĪM IN SŪRAH MARYAM, AL- AN'ĀM, AND AL-ANBIYĀ'

#### 5.1. Brief Overview

God emphasizes the importance of mentioning the story of Ibrāhīm in verses 41 through 50 of *sūrah* Maryam, where they illustrated a conversation between him and his father Āzār when Ibrāhīm witnessed him worshipping inanimate objects (*mā lā yasma'u wa la yubṣiru wa lā yughnī 'anka shai`ā*) other than Allāh.<sup>649</sup> Exegetes have deemed these inanimate objects idols that Ibrāhīm's father worshipped.<sup>650</sup> Throughout the conversation, the verses sketch Ibrāhīm's manners and approach towards his idol-worshipping father in his effort to uphold the concept of tawhīd within his own family.<sup>651</sup> Thus within these manners and approaches, God portrays to the reader the extent of Ibrāhīm's *rahmah* for his father. At the same time, Ibrāhīm's efforts are not gone unnoticed by God, as He mentions in the last few verses of this part of the *sūrah*.<sup>652</sup>

Section 5.2 in this study will explore the manifestations of the concept of *rahmah* inductively by exploring three primary *happenings* throughout the verses. First, the study examines Ibrāhīm's reactions to witnessing his father's polytheistic action. Secondly, his reactions subjected to the harsh reply from his father, and lastly, God's response in return

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<sup>649</sup> Qur'ān 19:41-50.

<sup>650</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*,

<https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=1&tSoraNo=19&tAyahNo=41&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>. See major tāfāsīr (exegetes works) such as Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī and others.

<sup>651</sup> Qur'ān 19:42:48.

<sup>652</sup> Qur'ān 19:49:50.

to these endeavors.<sup>653</sup> Furthermore, the Qur'ān elaborates in seven groups of verses the theme of Ibrāhīm's rebuking of the idol worshippers and his invitation towards *al-tawhīd*. These groups of verses are in *sūrah* Maryam (41-50), al-Shu'arā' (69-89), al-Şaffāt (83-100), al-Anbiyā' (51-73), al-Ankabūt (16-27), al-Baqarah (258), and in *sūrah* al-An'ām (74-81).<sup>654</sup> From these, only one group specifically addresses Ibrāhīm's call towards the oneness of God exclusively to his father; his narrative in *sūrah* Maryam (41-50)<sup>655</sup>. In addition to this, only towards the end of these verses found in *sūrah* Maryam God mentions prophets Ishāq and Ya'qūb as a gift (*hibah*) for prophet Ibrāhīm's retreat from his father, his people, and their discourse. In the other afore-mentioned groups of verses, on the other hand, despite mentioning the *hibah* of Ishāq and Ya'qūb to Ibrāhīm, the relationships between this *hibah* and Ibrāhīm's retreat are not so much emphasized.

The upcoming sections, 5.3 and 5.4, will demonstrate what these relationships entail by using the verses from *sūrah* al-An'ām and al-Anbiyā' as examples. In these sections, the Arabic form of the verses is retained instead of their transliterations to locate and demonstrate the repeated words/phrases in the verses so that relationships and emerging themes construct between them. Subsequently, this study challenges these themes' correlations with the concept of *al-raḥmah*.

<sup>653</sup> Sayyid Qutb, *In the Shades of the Qur'an*, vol. 11 [no publication info], 270 & 281, kalamullah.com, accessed January 14, 2023,

[https://www.kalamullah.com/Books/InTheShadeOfTheQuranSayyidQutb/volume\\_11\\_surahs\\_16-20.pdf](https://www.kalamullah.com/Books/InTheShadeOfTheQuranSayyidQutb/volume_11_surahs_16-20.pdf).

Sayyid Qutb extracts two main topics from these accounts of Ibrāhīm, namely 'A Son's Passionate Appeal' and 'An Insolent Answer to a Passionate Appeal.' As can be seen, this division, although feasible, is not based on the concept of *rahmah* but focuses more on the contrast between an unbelieving father and a believing and Godly son.

<sup>654</sup> Didin Faqihudin, "THE STORY OF ABRAHAM'S PREACHING IN ALQURAN. HUNAFANA," *Jurnal Studia Islamika* 7, no.2 (2010): 135-144 on 135, DOI:10.24239/jsi.v7i2.95.

<sup>655</sup> Muḥammad Abu Shaṭīf al-Shahāt, *Khaṣā'is al-Naẓm al-Qur'ānī fī Qiṣṣah Ibrāhīm 'alayhi al-salām* [Peculiarity of the Qur'ānic Organization in the Narrative of Ibrāhīm, may peace be upon him] (Cairo, al-Mat'abah al-Amānah:1991), 26, 2021, <https://www.noor-book.com/-/كتاب-خصائص-النظم-القراني-في-قصة-ابراهيم-عليه-السلام-pdf>.

## 5.2. *Al-Rahmah* in the Narratives of Ibrāhīm in Sūrah Maryam

### 5.2.1. Ibrāhīm's Reactions Towards His Father's Polytheist Actions as a Devoted Son

The story begins when God says, '*wa udhkur fī al-kitābi Ibrāhīm, innahū kānā ṣiddīqan nabiyyā*<sup>656</sup> (mention (too), in the Quran, the story of Abraham. He was a man of truth, a prophet').<sup>657</sup> Thus what lies ahead about him is all based upon these characters of being *ṣiddīq* and of being a *nabiyy*<sup>658</sup> as the phrase *kānā ṣiddīqan nabiyyā* in verse forty-one can be connected to the particle *idh* in the next verse where the story begins, '*idh qāla li abīhi*, when he said to his father.

In this part of the story, prophet Ibrāhīm addresses his father lovingly with the calling of '*yā abati*',<sup>659</sup> he is portraying not only intense love but also an intense desire to protect and rescue his father from the harm of his actions.<sup>660</sup> This type of call is repeated four times throughout the story. With this type of address, he then warns his father by using four types of approach, as seen in the following verses:<sup>661</sup>

﴿٤٢﴾ إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ لِمَ تَعْبُدُ مَا لَا يَسْمَعُ وَلَا يُبْصِرُ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْكَ شَيْئًا

*Idh qāla li abīhi yā abati lima ta 'budu mālā yasma 'u wa lā yubṣiru wa lā yughnī 'anka shai 'ā*<sup>662</sup>,

﴿٤٣﴾ يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي قَدْ جَاءَنِي مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِكَ فَاتَّبِعْنِي أَهْدِكَ صِرَاطًا سَوِيًّا

*Yā abati innī qad jā 'anī mina al- 'ilmi mā lam ya 'tika fattabi 'nī ahdika ṣirāṭan sawiyyā*<sup>663</sup>

﴿٤٤﴾ يَا أَبَتِ لَا تَعْبُدِ الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمَنِ عَصِيًّا

<sup>656</sup> Qur'ān 19:41.

<sup>657</sup> Translation by Abdul Haleem, <https://quran.com/19>.

<sup>658</sup> Abu al-Qāsim Jār Allah Maḥmūd bin 'Umar al-Zamakhshārī al-Khawārazimī, *Tafsir al-Kashshāf 'an Haqā'iq al-Tanzīl wa 'Uyūn al-Aqāwīl fī Wujūh al-Ta'wīl*, 3rd edition, (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 2009), 637.

<sup>659</sup> According to al-Zamakhshārī in his *al-Kashshāf*, the *yā* of *al-mutakallim* (the *yā* of the first person, thus meaning *my father*) does not come to light to prevent the clashing of the *'iwaḍ* and the *'iwaḍ minhu*.

<sup>660</sup> Muḥammad al-Rāzī Fakhr al-Dīn bin 'Umar, *Tafsīr Maḥāṭib al-Ghaib*, vol. 21, (Dār al-Fikr, Beirut: 1981), 227.

<sup>661</sup> Translation by Abdul Haleem, <https://quran.com/19>.

<sup>662</sup> Qur'ān 19:42 (Translated as He said to his father, 'Father, why do you worship something that can neither hear nor see nor benefit you in any way?').

<sup>663</sup> Qur'ān 19:43 (Translated as "Father, knowledge that has not reached you has come to me, so follow me: I will guide you to an even path.")

*Yā abati lā ta 'budi al-shaiṭāna inna al-shaiṭāna kāna li al-Raḥmāni 'aṣiyyā*<sup>664</sup>

{٤٥} يَا أَبَتِ إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يَمَسَّكَ عَذَابٌ مِّنَ الرَّحْمَنِ فَتَكُونَ لِلشَّيْطَانِ وَلِيًّا

*Yā abati innī akhāfu an yamassaka 'adhābun mina al-Raḥmāni fatakūna li al-shaiṭāni waliyyā*<sup>665</sup>

The first approach is to use a question to establish refutations against what the addressee is doing, also known as *al-istiḥām al-inkārī*.<sup>666</sup> This method establishes that what his father is worshipping are indeed idols - inanimate objects which cannot do anything for him - while asking his father to form these answers in his mind.<sup>667</sup> In terms of Ibrāhīm's gentle confrontation with his father, he uses three general characteristics of the worshipped idols in the case of Ibrāhīm's father: *lā yasma'u* (it does not hear), *wa lā yubṣiru* (it does not see), *wa lā yughnī 'anka shai`ā* (and it is not able to give any benefit what so ever to you). All of these points are climactic for the impossibility of being a god. To be God, one must be able to hear the invocations of the beseechers and examine their efforts to judge deserving factors before providing answers to their prayers, positively or negatively. The three characteristics of the idols mentioned in this verse immobilize them from achieving this as they encapsulate the total opposites of what it means to be God.<sup>668</sup> This approach forces the listener to use his best judgment to decide if his action will benefit him.

The second approach is by the establishment based on firm knowledge, also known as *al-taqrīr al-khabarī*.<sup>669</sup> In this verse, Ibrāhīm informs his father of the importance of following the correct knowledge in the discourse of worshipping a Rabb, *qad jā`anī mina al-'ilmi mā lam ya'tika*. He then requests his father to follow him, opening the gate of guidance to him, *fatabi 'nī ahdika ṣirātan sawiyyā*.<sup>670</sup>

<sup>664</sup> Qur'ān 19:44 (Translated as Father, do not worship Satan- Satan has rebelled against the Lord of Mercy.)

<sup>665</sup> Qur'ān 19:45 (Translated as: Father, I fear that a punishment from the Lord of Mercy may afflict you and that you may become Satan's companion [in Hell].')

<sup>666</sup> Muṣṭafā Muslim and Najbah 'Ulamā', *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*, 4:452.

<sup>667</sup> Muṣṭafā Muslim and Najbah 'Ulamā', *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*, 4:449.

<sup>668</sup> Muḥammad al-Rāzī Fakhr al-Dīn bin 'Umar, *Tafsīr Mafātiḥ al-Ghaib*, (Dār al-Fikr, Beirut: 1981), 21:225.

<sup>669</sup> Muṣṭafā Muslim and Najbah 'Ulamā', *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*, 4:449

<sup>670</sup> Al-Rāzī, *Mafātiḥ al-Ghaib*, 21: 225.

The third approach, as seen in verse forty-four, indicates persuasion not to worship shaiṭan by following him through *al-naḥyi al-ṣarīḥ*.<sup>671</sup> He is a tenacious rebel against the One who always bestows much goodness and pleasure upon His creations, thus the application of *al-Raḥmān*. The mentioning of God by his name *al-Raḥmān* in the same verse<sup>672</sup> as the word *shaiṭān* and *'aṣiyya* (in a superlative form, or *mubālagḥah*) deserves attention. According to al-Biqā'i (d. 885/1480), the verse mentions worshipping shaiṭan to point out the reality of what Ibrahim's father indeed assigns as Rabb; what he avidly invokes from is, in reality, nothing. They are objects that cannot and *do not* do anything. Fundamentally speaking, he is obeying and satisfying the desires of *al-shaiṭān* by not worshipping Allāh; thus, he is becoming an *'abd* to shaiṭān as Rabb. The mentioning of the name of Allāh *al-Raḥmān* in connection to *shaiṭān* and *adhāb* is to portray the fact that he genuinely rebels (indicated by the term *'āṣīy*) against the One who is generous in His giving, despite these honorable traits of His.<sup>673</sup> In this verse, prophet Ibrāhīm tries to call his father back to the oneness of God by using a name of God which depicts generosity and gentleness, *al-Raḥmān*, instead of using something which would directly denote power and reverence, such as the name *al-Jabbār*. Al-Biqā'i views that the usage of *al-Raḥmān* instead of a sterner name, such as *al-Jabbār*, is to negate the possibility of those suspicions that God as the Most Merciful (*al-Raḥmān*) is unable to discipline those who disobey Him<sup>674</sup>, thus strengthening the conviction of the existence and ability of the One and only God, Allah, in the mind of the listener, in this case, Ibrāhīm's father.

Therefore, this third approach exhibits Ibrāhīm's *rahmah* towards his father, demonstrating that a gentle call is much more inviting than a harsher one.

Arriving at the last and fourth approach, it is only here that Ibrāhīm finally mentions a sterner reminder to his father as intimidation (*al-tarḥīb*).<sup>675</sup> He uses the words like 'punishes', *yamassaka al-'adhāb*, and the phrase indicating close companionships with *al-*

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<sup>671</sup> Muṣṭafā Muslim and Najbah 'Ulamā', *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*, 4:452

<sup>672</sup> Qur'ān 19:44

<sup>673</sup> Al-Biqā'i, *Naẓm al-Durar*, 12:208.

<sup>674</sup> Al-Biqā'i, *Naẓm al-Durar*, 12:206.

<sup>675</sup> Muṣṭafā Muslim and Najbah 'Ulamā', *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*, 4: 452.

*shaitān*, *li al-shaitān waliyyan* despite also remaining to use words with gentler connotations such as '*akhāfu*' and '*al-Raḥmān*'.<sup>676</sup> Ibn' Āshūr (d. 1393/1973) extracted the meaning of *al-raḥmah* from this attribute of God, in a sense that He is the *Rabb* who always gives *al-raḥmah*. This attribute of God, however overwhelmingly filled with love and generosity towards His creatures, can be nullified by the action of *shirk*. This injustice, *shirk*, is the worst act against God which *al-shaitān* always propagates humankind. He is the ultimate rebel against God, '*aṣṭy*', propelling his followers to become one with him, ultimately inflicting God's wrath and thus forbidding divine *raḥmah*<sup>677</sup>. Despite being *al-Raḥmān*, Ibrāhīm is reminding his father that this God is more than capable of punishing<sup>678</sup> and the atrocity of the crime of associating partners with Him by worshipping these essentially dead idols that it completely wipes out His mercy.<sup>679</sup>

The above discussions thus reflect the fact that Ibrāhīm is both tactful and gentle in his approach to his father by starting with an intriguing question of why one worships what he worships, which is followed by an indirect answer to the question and an invitation to follow the right path through the correct knowledge ('ilm). Subsequently, Ibrāhīm further shakes the core of his father by making him see whom he is making *the Rabb* in reality before finally alarming his father of a devastating end, that of punishment by the Most Merciful, and a very evil companionship, that with the *shaitān*. All of Ibrahim's enlightenment begins here with the address calling to his father, '*yā abati*'. This loving and gentle address is an indication of a son who is *bārran bi wālidayhi*, extremely devoted to his or her parents, *ḥirṣan 'alā ḥālihimā*, always concerned with their conditions.<sup>680</sup> All of this manifests *al-raḥmah* from *Ibrāhīm* towards his father.

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<sup>676</sup> Qur'ān 19:45.

<sup>677</sup> Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn 'Āshūr, *Tafsīr al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr* [Interpretation of Verification and Enlightenment], vol.16, (Tūnis: al-Dār al-Tūnisiyyah li al-Nashr, 1984), 117.

<sup>678</sup> al- Biqā'ī, *Naẓm al-Durar*, 12:208

<sup>679</sup> Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 16:117-118.

<sup>680</sup> Muṣṭafā Muslim and Najbah 'Ulamā', *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*, 4: 448.

## 5.2.2. Ibrāhīm's Reactions Upon His Father's Insolent Remarks

The conversation continues with Ibrāhīm's father rebuking him back in verse forty-six:<sup>681</sup>

﴿٤٦﴾ قَالَ أَرَأَيْتُ أَنْتَ عَنْ آلِهَتِي يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ لَمَّا نَزَّلْنَا لَكَ آيَاتِنَا وَأَهْجُرْنِي مَلِيًّا

*Qāla a rāghibun anta 'an ālihatī yā Ibrāhīmu? La in lam tantahi la arjumannaka wa uhjurnī maliyyā.*<sup>682</sup>

Ibrāhīm's father's first impression is bewilderment at Ibrahim's intense aversion towards his gods as if he was saying to himself, "Nobody else has ever despised them before, nor should there ever be anyone who does so!" The forwarding of the predicate (*khavar*) '*rāghibun*' to the beginning of the sentence indicates a subtle distinction.<sup>683</sup> Not listening nor accepting Ibrāhīm's warning and advice, he threatens his son with additional harsh words - *la in lam tantahi la arjumannaka* - if you do not desist, I will surely stone you!<sup>684</sup> Stoning here, is according to some of the exegetes such as al-Ṭabarī,<sup>685</sup> Zamakhsharī,<sup>686</sup> and Ibn Kathīr,<sup>687</sup> is 'stoning with words or abuse, while al-Biqāī<sup>688</sup> and Ibn 'Āshūr opine that the meaning of *rajm* as killing.<sup>689</sup>

As if the threat of abuse and murder is not enough for Ibrāhīm, his father added the order for Ibrāhīm to disconnect from him for a long while, *wa uhjurnī maliyyā!* (So stay away from me for a prolonged amount of time.).<sup>690</sup> Here, according to some, the word *maliyyan*

<sup>681</sup> Qur'ān 19:46

<sup>682</sup> ([His father] said, "Have you no desire for my gods, O Abraham? If you do not desist, I will surely stone you, so avoid me a prolonged time". (Translation by Saheeh International).

<sup>683</sup> al-Zamakhsharī, *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf*, 638.

<sup>684</sup> Qur'ān 19:46.

<sup>685</sup> Abū Ja'far Muḥammad bin Jarīr bin Yazīd al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*, vol. 15 (Cairo: al-Markāz al-Buhūth wa al-Dirāsah al-'Arabiyyah bi Dār Hajr, 2001), 551.

<sup>686</sup> al-Zamakhsharī al-Khawārazimī, *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf*, 638.

<sup>687</sup> al-Hāfiẓ abī al-Fidā' Ismā'īl bin 'Umar bin Kathīr al-Qurashī al-Dimashqī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm* [The Great Qur'ān] (Riyād: Dār al-Taybah li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzīgh, 1999), vol. 5, 235, <https://archive.org/details/43005PDF/tqa0/mode/1up>.

<sup>688</sup> Al- Biqāī, *Naẓm al-Durar*, 12:207.

<sup>689</sup> Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 16: 207. Ibn 'Āshūr states that the *rajm* (stoning) is *kināyah* for killing and that the assignment of this action towards himself is based upon the custom at that time that the father has the right to do so to his son.

<sup>690</sup> Qur'ān 19:46.

means a long period<sup>691</sup> while others in the meaning of *sawiyyan sāliman* (safe and sound).<sup>692</sup> According to al-Ṭabarī, this is a more suitable meaning because of the next part of the verse where Ibrāhīm's father says to him that he will 'stone' him if he halts from correcting him. Thus, if he separates from him, he will be able to leave safe and sound from being attacked by harsh words, while the first meaning does not have a base (of why he has left his father for a long time, and not simply leave him forever).<sup>693</sup>

It is evident that the three parts response of Ibrāhīm's father is utterly void from the concept of *al-rahmah*; on the contrary, it fits into its antonym, *al-'adhāb*. The first attack is to rebuke him with a rhetorical question, "Do you despise my gods, oh Ibrāhīm!" in denial that his son is rejecting his beloved idols. Secondly, by threats of killing or abuse, and lastly, by the harshest punishment that a father can ever give to his son, to disown him by asking him to leave for a long time.

All of this ought to cause turbulence for Ibrāhīm. Who would not be angered by an ill-mannered reaction like so? Which son would not be upset to be disowned by his own father? Nevertheless, Ibrāhīm proves his *rahmah* as a devoted and loving son to his father, as shown in his response in the following verse:

{٤٧} قَالَ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكَ سَأَسْتَغْفِرُ لَكَ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِي حَفِيًّا

*Qāla salāmun 'alayka, sa'astaghfiru laka rabbī, innahu kāna bī ḥafīyyā*<sup>694</sup>

{٤٨} وَأَعْتَرُكُم مَّا تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَأَدْعُو رَبِّي عَسَىٰ أَلَّا أَكُونَ بِدُعَاءِ رَبِّي شَقِيًّا

*wa a'tazilukum wa mā tad'ūna min dūni Allāhī wa ad'ū rabbī 'asā allā akūna bi du'ā'i rabbī shaqīyyā*<sup>695</sup>

<sup>691</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī, Vol. 15, 552-553.

<sup>692</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī, Vol. 15, 554.

<sup>693</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī, Vol. 15, 555.

<sup>694</sup> Qur'ān 19:47, translated by Saheeh International: ([Abraham] said, "Peace [i.e., safety] will be upon you. I will ask forgiveness for you of my Lord. Indeed, He is ever gracious to me.")

<sup>695</sup> Qur'ān 19:48, translated by Saheeh International: And I will leave you and those you invoke other than Allah and will invoke my Lord. I expect that I will not be in invocation to my Lord unhappy [i.e., disappointed]."

The first thing he says to his father is *salām*, infinite peace. The second, *sa astaghfiru laka rabbī*, I will ask forgiveness for you of my Lord. Lastly, he expresses a gentle and generous attribute of God as his Rabb, *innahu kāna bī ḥafīyyā*; indeed, He is ever gracious to me. These words reflect characteristics of *al-riqqah*, *al-rifq*, *al-līn*, and *al-ḥanān*, all of which are components of *al-raḥmah*.<sup>696</sup>

His well-wishing greeting, *salāmun' alayka*, for his father is part of his noble manners and etiquette (*adāb*) towards a parent. No matter how harsh and mean his father treats Ibrāhīm, he will never reciprocate back the same way.<sup>697</sup> It is a noble reply to a maleficent blow because to express *salām* is greeting and honoring someone simultaneously.<sup>698</sup> Then an *istighfār*, seeking forgiveness for his father, follows suit. This deed reflects a son sincerely concerned for his father's condition. The exegeses narrate that Ibrāhīm's repentance for his father lasted for an extended period of time. Ibrāhīm still asks God for forgiveness for his father even when he already had his son Ismā'il and was building the Ka'bah with him, as also narrated in *sūrah* Ibrāhīm.<sup>699</sup> Ibn 'Āshūr, in his tafsīr, also points out that the usage of future-tense form (*fi'il muḍāri'*) on the word '*sa astaghfiru*' indicates the repetition of Ibrāhīm's *istighfār* for his father in the future. As for why he is asking for forgiveness for his mushrik (polytheistic) father, it is not exclusively for forgiveness alone but also in the hope that God will guide him to the right path.<sup>700</sup> His confidence in God was very high as he mentions the word *ḥafīyy* in the next part of the verse, *innahū kāna bī ḥafīyya*.

The word *ḥafīyy* suits the context as it lexically means being welcoming; honoring.<sup>701</sup> It reflects a required attribute of a *Rabb* towards his servants.<sup>702</sup> A Rabb who is *ḥafīyy* welcomes his servants' invocations *laṭīfan*, by being soft and gentle.<sup>703</sup> Ibn 'Āshūr states that *al-Ḥafīyy* means the One who is intense in his *al-birr* (doing various kinds of

<sup>696</sup> Muṣṭafā Muslim and Najbah 'Ulamā', *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*, 4: 448.

<sup>697</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, 236

<sup>698</sup> Ibn 'Āshūr, *al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 16:121.

<sup>699</sup> Quran 14:41.

<sup>700</sup> Ibn 'Āshūr, *Tafsīr al-Tahrīr*, 16: 121.

<sup>701</sup> Wehr, s.v. "حفو", in *Hans Wehr Dictionary*, 223, (<https://ejtaal.net/aa/#hw4=236>).

<sup>702</sup> Al-Biqā'ī, *Naẓm al-Durar*. 12:208.

<sup>703</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, 15:548.

goodness) and in *al-Altāf*, gentleness.<sup>704</sup> Thus it is only rational and sensible for Ibrāhīm to express this after he intends to seek repentance for his father, ever confident that his father will be forgiven and guided to the One God.

More than this, he obeys his father to leave him, as shown in verse forty-eight, where he says *wa a'tazilukum wa mā tad'ūna min dūni Allāh*, I will leave you and those you invoke other than Allah, *wa ad'ū rabbī 'āsā an lā akūnu bi du'ā`i rabbī shaqiyyā*, and I will invoke my Lord, I expect that I will not be in my invocation to my Lord unhappy.

The verse uses the word *i'tizāl* in the first person *muḍāri'*; *a'tazilu*, to emphasize that Prophet Ibrāhīm will completely detach himself from his father and his people and those things which they invoke upon, for the sake of his Rabb, Allāh. The term comes in the future tense, indicating that time shall not bind this action of Ibrāhīm, au contraire, how long this injustice against Allāh lasts, will.<sup>705</sup>

This good gesture reflects his complete devotion and loyalty to God and only to Him. He indicates this by emphasizing that the true Rabb worthy of worship is that which will never disappoint an invocation (reflected by the phrase *an lā akūnu bi du'ā`i rabbī shaqiyyā*),<sup>706</sup> and thus why he will only invoke Him and not the idols his father and his people invoke for their needs and desires.<sup>707</sup>

With this, Prophet Ibrāhīm shows his father that while being gentle and full of *raḥmah* towards him, he still prefers Allāh and His oneness (*al-tawḥīd*) in his heart more than anything else in this world, including his own father. This discourse may seem somewhat immaterial - meaning not so obvious - to the concept of *al-raḥmah*, but the next section will prove otherwise. The succeeding verses will illustrate the plethora of divine *al-raḥmah* that overflows upon prophet Ibrāhīm due to these endeavors.

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<sup>704</sup> Ibn 'Āshūr, *Tafsīr al-Taḥrīr*, 16:22.

<sup>705</sup> Al-Biqā'ī, *Naẓm al-Durar*, 12:208.

<sup>706</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, 5:236.

<sup>707</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 15:556.

### 5.2.3. *Al-Raḥmah* of God to Prophet Ibrāhīm

As one part closes in this *sūrah*, another opens; the part where God shows that He is the all seer, the all hearer, the all-appreciative to the efforts of His most loyal slave. God says in verse 49:

﴿٤٩﴾ فَلَمَّا اعْتَرَاهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ كُلًّا جَعَلْنَا نَبِيًّا

*falammā i 'tazalahum wa mā ya 'budūna min dūni Allāhi wahabnā lahū Ishāq wa*

*Ya'qūba wa kullān ja 'alnā nabīyyā.*<sup>708</sup>

From this verse, it is seen that God is gifting Ibrāhīm with a lineage of prophets, first a son who is a prophet by the name of *Ishāq*, then his son with the name of *Ya'qūb*. It is from God's *raḥmah* that He replaced Ibrāhīm's loss of family with a new and much better one. The following exegeses' opinions support this view:

- (1) Ibn' Āshūr mentions that Ibrāhīm left his father and his people under harsh treatment for the sake of God, and God is ever-appreciative. Thus, He gifted him a family who will give him a lot of satisfaction and peace of mind by giving him a son who is a prophet, *Ishāq*, and a grandson, *Ya'qūb*, who is also a prophet.<sup>709</sup> Ibn' Āshūr also reminds the reader of the reason why the verse only mentions *Ishāq* and not *Ismā'īl* in this context. It is because, at that time, it was his wife Sarah who accompanied his departure and not Hajar, *Ismā'il*'s mother. Therefore it is only natural that God mentions progenies from her lineage.<sup>710</sup> Another part of the Qur'ān relates the *hibah* of *Ismā'īl* for Ibrāhīm.<sup>711</sup>
- (2) Al-Ṭabarī considers that the *hibah* (gift) of God to Ibrahim of *Ishāq* and *Ya'qūb*, which are of his offspring, as prophets, are honorable replacements to the family

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<sup>708</sup> Qur'ān 19:49: "...So when he had left them and those they worshipped other than Allah, We gave him Isaac and Jacob, and each [of them] We made a prophet. (Translation by Saheeh International).

<sup>709</sup> According to Ibn' Āshūr, Ibrāhīm had a chance to see *Ya'qūb* live because he was born 50 years before Ibrāhīm's death (Ibn' Āshūr, 16:125).

<sup>710</sup> Ibn' Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 16:123-124.

<sup>711</sup> *Ibid.*, 16:125.

that he lost because of his adherence and uplifting the concept of *tawhīd* to his father and his people.<sup>712</sup>

- (3) Like al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr also mentions that *al-ḥibah* of Ishāq and Ya'qūb is a superior replacement to his family that he had left, as shown in *sūrāḥ al-Anbiyā'*<sup>713</sup> and in *sūrah Hūd*,<sup>714</sup> as saḥīḥ Bukhārī and Muslim also narrate about their lineage and prophethood.<sup>715</sup>

Then God elaborates further the gifts which He showers not only upon Ibrāhīm, but also onto Ishāq, and Ya'qūb, as another *rahmah* from Him. God says in verse fifty:

{٥٠} وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُمْ مِنْ رَحْمَتِنَا وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ عَلِيًّا

*wa wahabnā lahum min raḥmatinā wa ja 'alnā lahum lisāna ṣidqin 'aliyya'*<sup>716</sup>

Here again, He repeats the verb '*wahaba*' to express the gifting of a special divine *rahmāh* for all three prophets, *wa wahabnā lahum min raḥmatinā*, And We gave them of Our *rahmah*. Several exegetes interpreted the term *rahmatinā* as follows:

- (1) Al-Rāzī (d. 607/1210) considers it to carry the meaning of other gifts alongside prophethood, such as benefits and gain in their worldly and everlasting lives such as wealth, reverence, being a role model and leader to others, and having progenies.<sup>717</sup>
- (2) Abū Ḥayyān (d. 854/1450), in his *Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīt*, narrates the opinions of others for this word as *al-nubū'ah* and wealth and children. However, he prefers the meaning of knowledge and honor in this world and felicity (*al-na'īm*) in the hereafter.<sup>718</sup>

<sup>712</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 15:556.

<sup>713</sup> Qur'ān 21:72 (And We gave him Isaac and Jacob in addition, and all [of them] We made righteous.)

<sup>714</sup> Qur'ān 11:71 (And his Wife was standing, and she smiled. Then We gave her good tidings of Isaac and after Isaac, Jacob.)

<sup>715</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, 5:237.

<sup>716</sup> Qur'ān 19:50: "And We gave them of Our mercy, and We made for them a mention [i.e., reputation] of high honor." Translation by Saheeh International (quran.com).

<sup>717</sup> al-Rāzī, *Maḥāṭib al-Ghaib*, 2:231

<sup>718</sup> Muḥammad bin Yūsuf Abī Ḥayyān al-Andalusī al-Gharnāṭī, *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīt fī al-Tafsīr*, (Dār al-Fikr, Beirut: 2010), 7:273.

(3) Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923) considers the term *raḥmatinā* in verse 50 in the meaning of proving *rizq* (provisions).<sup>719</sup>

More than the above, God raises their mention, *wa ja'alnā lahum lisāna ṣidqin 'aliyyā*, a lofty and beautiful commend.<sup>720</sup> This mention lasts a lifetime, projecting another form of *al-raḥmah* of God to Ibrāhīm, Ishāq, and Ya'qūb.<sup>721</sup>

Thus it can be extracted that the concept of *al-raḥmah* from God can be categorized into three in this story, firstly that which is indicated by the verb *wahaba*, meaning the bestowments of gifts, of a son and a grandson as prophets, and secondly that which comes along with it; a special *raḥmah* on being prophets. Prophets carry an abundance of goodness and honor in this world and the next. Lastly, *al-raḥmah* connotes honorable mention that lasts from this world onto the next.

### 5.3. *Al-Raḥmah* in the Narratives of Ibrāhīm in Sūrah al-An'ām

The following eight verses in *sūrah* al-An'ām (verses 74-83) that capture a leading theme related to the word *hibah* in the context of the story of Ibrāhīm cannot be deciphered without a thorough glance between them and the proceeding verses. The start of this string of verses conveys Ibrāhīm's concerns for his father's and his people's association with idols.<sup>722</sup> From here on, the narrative focuses on how God's guidance<sup>723</sup> to Ibrāhīm leads him to have strong arguments to convince himself that there can only be one God, the Creator of everything, Allāh. God guides him to see Him as the only Creator through creations such as the night, moon, sun, and stars."<sup>724</sup> In the end, it is this guidance of God towards him that Ibrāhīm uses as proof and argument against his people; that Allāh is the

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<sup>719</sup> Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, 15:556

<sup>720</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*, 5:238. As stated by Ibn 'Abbās as quoted in *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*.

<sup>721</sup> Muṣṭafā Muslim and Najbah 'Ulamā', *al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*, 4: 451.

<sup>722</sup> Qur'ān 6:73 (Translated as: "And [mention, O Muhammad], when Abraham said to his father Azar, "Do you take idols as deities? Indeed, I see you and your people to be in manifest error.").

<sup>723</sup> Qur'ān 6:73 (Translated as: "And thus did We show Abraham the realm of the heavens and the earth that he would be among the certain [in faith]).

<sup>724</sup> Qur'ān 6:76-78.

only God.<sup>725</sup> These arguments were also to be narrated by Prophet Muḥammad to the polytheists of Makkah the same way Ibrāhīm did to his people because both of their people worshipped statues of idols.<sup>726</sup> Thus this is how the story of Ibrāhīm here preambulates, in the following verses, the mentioning of the rest of the prophets whom God gifted with guidance.

In *sūrah* al-An'ām, the *hibah* (*maṣḍar* of the word *wahaba*) of prophet Iṣḥāq and Ya'qūb to prophet Ibrāhīm resides within the context of these long lines of prophets. See the proceeding verses, with the derivatives of the word owning a root letter *h-d-y* being in bold found in them nine times:<sup>727</sup>

وَحَاجَهُ قَوْمُهُ<sup>٧٢٥</sup> قَالَ أَتُحَاجُّونِي فِي اللَّهِ وَقَدْ هَدَانِ<sup>٧٢٦</sup> وَلَا أَخَافُ مَا تُشْرِكُونَ بِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ رَبِّي شَيْئًا وَسِعَ رَبِّي كُلَّ شَيْءٍ  
عِلْمًا<sup>٧٢٧</sup> أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ  
وَكَيْفَ أَخَافُ مَا أَشْرَكْتُمْ وَلَا تَخَافُونَ أَنَّكُمْ أَشْرَكْتُمْ بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزَّلْ بِهِ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطَانًا<sup>٧٢٨</sup> فَأَيُّ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ أَحَقُّ بِالْأَمْنِ<sup>٧٢٩</sup> إِنْ  
كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ  
الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوا إِيمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ أُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ الْأَمْنُ وَهُمْ مُهْتَدُونَ  
وَتِلْكَ حُجَّتُنَا آتَيْنَاهَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَلَى قَوْمِهِ<sup>٧٣٠</sup> نَرْفَعُ دَرَجَاتٍ مَن نَّشَاءُ<sup>٧٣١</sup> إِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ  
وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ<sup>٧٣٢</sup> كُلًّا هَدَيْنَا<sup>٧٣٣</sup> وَنُوحًا هَدَيْنَا<sup>٧٣٤</sup> مِنْ قَبْلُ<sup>٧٣٥</sup> وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِ دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ وَأَيُّوبَ وَيُوسُفَ وَمُوسَى  
وَهَارُونَ<sup>٧٣٦</sup> وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ  
وَزَكَرِيَّا وَيَحْيَى وَعِيسَى وَإِلْيَاسَ<sup>٧٣٧</sup> كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ  
وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَالْيَسَعَ وَيُونُسَ وَلُوطًا<sup>٧٣٨</sup> وَكُلًّا فَضَّلْنَا عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ  
وَمِنَ آبَائِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِمْ وَإِخْوَانِهِمْ<sup>٧٣٩</sup> وَاجْتَبَيْنَاهُمْ<sup>٧٤٠</sup> وَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ<sup>٧٤١</sup> إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ  
ذَلِكَ هُدَى اللَّهِ يَهْدِي<sup>٧٤٢</sup> بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ<sup>٧٤٣</sup> وَلَوْ أَشْرَكُوا لَحَبِطَ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ  
أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ<sup>٧٤٤</sup> فَإِنْ يَكْفُرْ بِهَا هُؤُلَاءِ فَقَدْ وَكَلْنَا بِهَا قَوْمًا لَّيْسُوا بِهَا بِكَافِرِينَ  
أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ<sup>٧٤٥</sup> فَبِهَدَاهُمْ<sup>٧٤٦</sup> اقْتَدِهْ<sup>٧٤٧</sup> قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا<sup>٧٤٨</sup> إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِلْعَالَمِينَ

As seen in the narration of prophet Ibrāhīm, his people argued against him while he answered in the affirmative about how God has guided him (*a tuḥājjanā fi Allāh wa qad hadāni?*). Then God focuses on the giving of '*hujjah*' upon him over his people, *wa tilka*

<sup>725</sup> Qur'ān 6:80 (Translation: Do you argue with me concerning Allah while He has guided me?).

<sup>726</sup> Al-Biqā'ī, *Naẓm al-Durar*, <https://tafsir.app/nathm-aldurar/6/74>.

<sup>727</sup> Qur'ān 6:80-90.

*hujjatunā ātaināhā Ibrāhīma 'alā qawmih*, in the context of winning the argument against his idol-worshipping people.<sup>728</sup> He further says the preference of Ibrāhīm over others by degrees, *narfa'u darajātin man nashā'*, then pointing that He also gives guidance, *kullan hadaynā*, to Ibrāhīm's son and grandson, Ishāq and Ya'qūb. Further stated in the subsequent verses is a string of prophets whom God also guides with the guidance (*al-hudā*) which He gives to whomever He wills amongst his slaves, *dhālika huda Allahi yaḥdī bihi man yashā'u min `ibādih*.

Transparently, therefore, one of the central themes pronounced in this part of *sūrah al-An'ām* is that of God's guidance (*al-hudā*) to His prophets, especially noticeable by the nine times repetition of the word or its derivations. God's *raḥmah* to Ibrāhīm, in a sense,<sup>729</sup> is expressed through the *hudā* of God to win the arguments against the idol worshippers and His preference of him over others in degrees. In the narrative of Ibrāhīm in *sūrah Maryam*, on the other hand, the context is more about *al-raḥmah* itself in the shape of Ibrāhīm's loving and merciful actions towards Ibrāhīm's father, and God's gift (*hibah*) of Ishāq and Ya'qūb as prophets for Ibrāhīm as a reward to his retreating from his father, his people, and their evil actions.

#### 5.4. *Al-Raḥmah* in the Narratives of Ibrāhīm in *Sūrah al-Anbiyā'*

*Sūrah al-Anbiyā'* verses 51-73 also relate another dialogue between Ibrāhīm and his idol-worshipping people. It starts with God mentioning the *rushd* (correct guidance) given to Ibrāhīm.<sup>730</sup> The verse continued with *idh qāla li abīhi wa qawmihī mā hādhihī al-tamāthīlu allatī antum lahā 'ākifūn*, meaning that this *al-rushd* descended upon Ibrāhīm

<sup>728</sup> See verses 6:74- 75 where the context of Ibrāhīm's guidance begins as God mentioning how He shows the realm of the heavens and the earth in order for him to be one who is certain:

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ أَرَزَرْتَنِي أَنْتَجِدُ أَصْنَامًا إِلَهًا إِنِّي أُرَاكَ وَقَوْمَكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَكَذَلِكَ نُرِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلِيَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُوقِنِينَ

"And [mention, O Muhammad], when Abraham said to his father Azar, "Do you take idols as deities? Indeed, I see you and your people in manifest error." (74) So also did We show Abraham the realm of the heavens and the earth that he would be among the certain [in faith]."

<sup>729</sup> Jamīl Ṣalībān, s.v. "الرحمة و الرأفة" in *al-Mu'jam al-Falṣafīy*, 1:611. Because in God's act of giving guidance, there is a desire to give goodness and to prevent pain by not allowing the object of guidance to err in its path.

<sup>730</sup> Qur'ān 21:51 (*Wa laqad ātaynā Ibrāhīma rushdahū min qablu wa kunnā bihī `ālimin*)

challenging his father and his people, "what are these statues which you stay to worship?" Compared to Ibrāhīm's conversation found in *sūrah* Maryam, verses 51-73<sup>731</sup>, this *sūrah* indicates more of a debate between Ibrāhīm and his people about their idol worshipping, which he destroys. Through this, he challenges the idol worshippers to think about the reality of these statues they worship so intensely, claiming that the chief idol did all the destruction. Ibrāhīm's language towards his people is sterner, less forgiving, and to the point, such as:

قَالَ لَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ

*Qāla laqad kuntum antum wa ābā'ukum fī ḍalālin mubīn*

You were certainly, you and your fathers, in manifest error.<sup>732</sup>

وَتَاللَّهِ لَأَكِيدَنَّ أَصْنَامَكُمْ بَعْدَ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا مُدْبِرِينَ

*Wa tallāhi la akīdanna aṣṇāmakum ba'da an tuwallū mudbirīn*

And [I swear] by Allah, I will surely plan against your idols after you have turned and gone away.<sup>733</sup>

أَفِ لَكُمْ وَلِمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

*Uffin lakum wa limā ta'budūna min dūni Allāh! Afalā ta'qilūn?*

Uff! to you and to what you worship instead of Allah. Then will you not use reason?<sup>734</sup>

In *sūrah* Maryam, however, Ibrāhīm uses soft and polite language to address his father, as demonstrated in the previous subheading, thus showing more *al-rahmah* towards him. This *sūrah*, however, does not seem to show this type of *al-rahmah* in the dialogue between Ibrāhīm and his people.

Furthermore, towards the end of the verses, the mentioning of Iṣhāq and Ya'qūb as *al-hibah* from God to Ibrāhīm is combined with other verses where God portrays both his rescue (*al-najwah*) and his nephew prophet Lūṭ from harm.<sup>735</sup>

<sup>731</sup> Qur'ān 21:51-73

<sup>732</sup> Qur'ān 21:54 Translated by Saheeh International

<sup>733</sup> Qur'ān 21:57, Translated by Saheeh International

<sup>734</sup> Qur'ān 21:67, Translated by Saheeh International

<sup>735</sup> Qur'ān 21:69-73. Translated as "Allah said, "O fire, be coolness and safety upon Abraham." And they intended for him harm, but We made them the greatest losers. And We delivered him and Lot to the land

**فَلَمَّا يَنزَلُ كُونِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَيَّ اِبْرَاهِيمَ**

وَأَرَادُوا بِهِ كَيْدًا فَجَعَلْنَاهُمُ الْأَخْسَرِينَ

**وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَلُوطًا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا لِلْعَالَمِينَ**

**وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ نَافِلَةً ۗ وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا صَالِحِينَ**

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ وَكَانُوا لَنَا عِبِيدِينَ

Therefore, these five verses inductively indicate a nuance of rescue and mercy for Ibrāhīm as an expression of *al-rahmah* from God. The succeeding few āyāt enhance the nuance of severe difficulties and the rescue found in this part of the *sūrah*. There God uses either the words *istajabnā lahū*, *najjaynāhu*, or *kashafnā mā bihī min ḍurr* and *rahmah* (or its derivatives) within the same incidents to other prophets, including prophets Nūḥ, Ayyūb, Ismā‘īl, Idrīs, Dhu al-Kifli, Yūnus (Dhu al-Nūn), and Zakariyyā, in order to reflect His timely succor:<sup>736</sup>

وَلُوطًا إِتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا **وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي كَانَتْ تَعْمَلُ الْخَبَائِثَ ۗ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا سَوِيًّا**

**وَأَدْخَلْنَاهُ فِي رَحْمَتِنَا ۗ إِنَّهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ**

وَنُوحًا إِذْ نَادَى مِنْ قَبْلُ **فَأَسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ فَجَازَيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ**

Alternatively, by a subtle mentioning of the word *rahmah* in the same incident when a distressful call is fulfilled, as shown below (also bolded and underlined):<sup>737</sup>

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which We had blessed for the worlds. We gave him Isaac and Jacob in addition, and all [of them] We made righteous. And We made them leaders, guiding by Our command. And We inspired to them the doing of good deeds, the establishment of prayer, and giving of zakāh; and they were worshippers of Us." (Saheeh International).

<sup>736</sup> Qur'ān 21:73-76. Translated as, "And to Lot, We gave judgment and knowledge, and We saved him from the city that was committing wicked deeds. Indeed, they were a people of evil, defiantly disobedient. And We admitted him into Our mercy. Indeed, he was of the righteous. And [mention] Noah, when he called [to Allah] before [that time], so We responded to him and saved him and his family from the great affliction [i.e., the flood]".

<sup>737</sup> Qur'ān 21:83-90. Translated as, "And [mention] Job, when he called to his Lord, "Indeed, adversity has touched me, and you are the Most Merciful of the merciful." So We responded to him and removed what afflicted him of adversity. And We gave him [back] his family and the like thereof with them as a mercy from Us and a reminder for the worshippers [of Allah]. And [mention] Ishmael and Idrees and Dhul-Kifl; all were of the patient. And We admitted them into Our mercy. Indeed, they were of the righteous. And [mention] the man of the fish, when he went off in anger and thought that We would not decree [anything] upon him. And he called out within the darknesses, "There is no deity except You; exalted are You. Indeed, I have been of the wrongdoers." So We responded to him and saved him from the distress. And thus do We save the believers. And [mention] Zechariah, when he called to his Lord, "My Lord, do not leave me alone [with no heir], while you are the best of inheritors." So We responded to him, and We gave to him John and

وَأَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَى رَبَّهُ أُنَىٰ مَسْنَىٰ الصُّرِّ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّحِمِينَ  
 فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ فَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِ مِنْ ضُرٍّ ۖ وَءَاتَيْنَاهُ أَهْلَهُ وَمِثْلَهُم مَّعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا وَذَكَرَىٰ لِلْعَالَمِينَ  
 وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِدْرِيسَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصَّابِرِينَ  
 وَأَدْخَلْنَاهُمْ فِي رَحْمَتِنَا ۚ إِنَّهُمْ مِّنَ الصَّالِحِينَ  
 وَذَا النُّونِ إِذْ ذَهَبَ مُغْرِبًا فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ فَنَادَىٰ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ  
 فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْغَمِّ ۖ وَكَذَلِكَ نُنَجِّي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ  
 وَزَكَرِيَّا إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْنِي فَرْدًا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْوَارِثِينَ  
 فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ يَحْيَىٰ وَأَصْلَحْنَا لَهُ زَوْجَهُ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَيَدْعُونَنَا رَغَبًا وَرَهَبًا ۖ وَكَانُوا لَنَا  
 خَاشِعِينَ

Here the derivatives of *al-najwah* are repeated three times, while the derivatives of *al-istijābah* and *al-nidā'* repeat four times, and the phrase *wa adkhalnāhu fī raḥmatinā* twice, while the other derivation of *al-raḥmah* three other times. Thus it can be deduced that the major themes here are the rescue from difficult situations along with the bestowment of *al-raḥmah*.

Conclusively, the divine *raḥmah* shown by God in this *sūrah* towards Ibrāhīm is consistent with what He gives to the other prophets, namely; of divine rescue (*al-najwah*). Although God also touches upon the gifting (*hibah*) of Ishāq and Ya'qūb to Ibrāhīm in verse seventy-two, the word '*nāfilatan*', additionally, is used, after first mentioning the sentence, *najaynāhu wa Lūṭan*, which denotes Ibrāhīm's rescue and Lūṭ's being consistent with the theme of *al-najwah*. In addition to this, God does not indicate the giving of '*raḥmah*' to Ibrāhīm, Ishāq, and Ya'qūb all together overtly, as He does in *sūrah* Maryam.<sup>738</sup> There, the expressions of *al-raḥmah* are more profound, more inclusive, and more intricate, as section 5.2 discussed previously.

amended for him his wife. Indeed, they used to hasten to good deeds and supplicate Us in hope and fear, and they were to Us humbly submissive."

<sup>738</sup> See Qur'ān 19:50.

## 5.5. Summary and Results

The *al-rahmah* in *sūrah* Maryam continues as it shifts its scene to prophet Ibrāhīm and his father, Āzar. Here, the nuance of *al-rahmah* disperses through Ibrāhīm's gentle and patient gestures as a devoted son towards his father's insolent remarks. *Al-rahmah* of God reflects further as he presented gifts (*hibāt*) of righteous children, prophets Ya'qūb and Ishāq in Ibrāhīm's lineage. On the other hand, the context of his story in *sūrah* al-An'ām is more of God's specific guidance (*al-hudā*) to His prophets. The context is especially noticeable by the nine times repetitions of the very word or its derivations there. God's *rahmah* to Ibrāhīm, in a sense, is expressed through the *hudā* of God that allows him to win the arguments against the idol worshippers. Another is His preference for him over others in degrees. Conversely, the context of Ibrāhīm's story in *sūrah* al-Anbiyā is consistent with what God bestows on other prophets also mentioned, namely of being rescued by God (*of al-najwah*). As *sūrah* al-An'ām, this *sūrah* also does not emit the nuance of *al-rahmah* strongly as in the case of *sūrah* Maryam, nor is it radiated as the primary intent of this part of the *sūrah*.

In *sūrah* Maryam, the discourse between Ibrāhīm and his disbelieving father mainly contains two types of *al-rahmah*, *al-rahmah insāniyyah* (human *rahmah*) and *al-rahmah al-ilāhiyyāh* (that of God). The story also projects the comprehensive components of *al-rahmah*, the existence of slaves (*al-'ibād*) and the Lord (*al-Rabb*), and the manifestations of the *al-rahmah* itself. Moreover, it portrays the two other essential aspects of *al-rahmah*, the seeking part (*al-istirhām*) and the act of its bestowment (*al-tarahḥum*).

Having *al-rahmah* as a human also means showing mercy and concern towards those whose actions despise God and us. There is good intent and concern for their safety that comes along with it, which stems from love. A righteous child does precisely this, so much so that even when the parents perform actions detested by God, they still address them most beautifully and gently. Ibrāhīm's gestures towards his disbelieving father in *sūrah* Maryam<sup>739</sup> exemplify this character; his loving call towards him that is shown by

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<sup>739</sup>As mentioned in sections 5.2.1 and 5.2.2 in this study.

the four-times usage of the term *yā abatī* (oh my dear father), his usage of God's attribute *al-Raḥmān* in his warning, his seeking of forgiveness for him, and his peaceful reply to his father's insolent remark by the greeting "*salāmun 'alayka*".

All of these actions point towards a depiction of a gentle, kind, and devoted child. These characteristics run parallel with the aspects of patience, gentleness, ease, and goodwill (in this case, to avert harm) towards a disbelieving person who also inflicts harm, shaping the basic meanings of *al-raḥmah* in a human being. In addition, his soft and gentle efforts to save his father from the harm of idolatry represent an expression of *al-raḥmah* by being *barran* (utmostly devoted) to him.

In this particular story, *al-tarraḥḥum* of *al-Raḥmah al-ilāhiyyāḥ* can be found in God's *hibah* (gifting) of righteous progeny (prophets Ishāq and Ya'qūb) to Ibrāhīm during his very golden age, and of prophetic status for all of them. However, these endowments came only after Ibrāhīm's sacrificial act, as God's slave, of abandoning his father and his erring people for His sake. The tables below will decipher and elaborate more in detail on the aspects of *al-raḥmah* mentioned above, including its components and modalities, as well as the key players' characteristics and actions.

**Table 5.1. Components of *al-Raḥmah* in the Story of Ibrāhīm**

<b>God as the Lord (<i>al-Rabb</i>) and as <i>al-Raḥmān</i></b>	<b>Prophet Ibrāhīm as a slave of God (<i>al-`abd</i>) and the One bestowed <i>al-raḥmah</i> (<i>al-marḥūm</i>)</b>	<b>Father of Ibrāhīm as a slave of God (<i>al-`abd</i>)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Trying His slaves (in this case, Ibrāhīm is tested by his father's actions)</li> <li>2. Merciful</li> <li>3. Generous</li> <li>4. Appreciative</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Preserving God's unity (tawhīd); saving his polytheist father from the harm of polytheism by:<sup>740</sup> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Approaching him with love and mercy,</li> <li>b. Justifying reason or argument by posing logical questions,</li> <li>c. Establishing the premise that correct worship is the straight path and based on knowledge (which he received from God and his father did not),</li> <li>d. Stating that he has distinctive knowledge from God,</li> <li>e. Commanding his father to stop injustice,</li> <li>f. Establishing premise, whom his father worships is actually al-shaiṭān,</li> <li>g. Establishing the premise that it is not logical to worship the One who rebels against <i>al-Raḥmān</i> (reminding the One who has been so merciful and generous to them),</li> </ol> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An <i>`abd</i> of God but acts as an <i>'abd</i> to idols, to shaiṭān.</li> <li>2. He was more loyal to his idols than to Ibrāhīm, his own son.<sup>741</sup></li> </ol>

<sup>740</sup> Qur‘ān 19:42-45, in this case, he addresses his father lovingly with "*yā abati...*" in all four verses.

<sup>741</sup> Qur‘ān 19:46.

**Table 5.1. (cont.)**

	<p>h. and finally, a gentle warning, full of concern and love, that there will be painful consequences in the advent of the continuity of this injustice. He possesses benevolence and a good intention to protect and save his father, despite his paganism.</p> <p>2. He is truthful (<i>ṣiddīq</i>).<sup>742</sup></p> <p>3. He is a prophet of God (<i>a nabiyy</i>).<sup>743</sup></p> <p>4. He replies to the harmful words of his father with the greeting of peace (<i>salām</i>).<sup>744</sup></p> <p>5. He invokes his <i>Rabb</i> in the hope of forgiveness for his father.<sup>745</sup></p> <p>6. He is convinced of the welcoming and forgiving nature of his <i>Rabb</i>.<sup>746</sup></p> <p>7. He abandons (for God's sake) the environment consisting of the act of injustice while keeping good thoughts on God and invoking Him.<sup>747</sup></p>	
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<sup>742</sup> Qur‘ān 19:41.

<sup>743</sup> Ibid.

<sup>744</sup> Qur‘ān 19:47. As part of the verse, "*qāla salāmun ‘alayka....*"

<sup>745</sup> Ibid. When he said, "*sa astaghfiru laka rabbī....*"

<sup>746</sup> Ibid. When he said, "...*innahū kāna bī ḥafīyyā....*" and in 19:48 when he said, "*‘asā allā akuna bi du ‘ā’ika rabbi shaqiyyā....*"

<sup>747</sup> Qur‘ān 19:48.

**Table 5.2. Manifestation of *al-Raḥmah* by God as *al-Rabb* in the Story of Ibrāhīm**

God's <i>Raḥmah</i> for Ibrāhīm	God's <i>raḥmah</i> for Ibrāhīm's father
<p>He gifts him a divine son. A son who is devoted and cares about his safety in the hereafter; by persuading him to be someone who worships the One God, and who prays for him.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. He grants Ibrāhīm divine characteristics, including being merciful towards his non-believing father, being <i>ṣiddīq</i>, being patient, being wise and intelligent.</li> <li>2. After Ibrāhīm departed from his father, honoring Ibrāhīm by granting him gifts (<i>hibah</i>) of:<sup>748</sup> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Prophetic lineage</li> <li>b. Special <i>raḥmah</i> to him, his son Ishāq, and his grandson Ya'qūb</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Honorable mention (<i>lisān ṣidq 'aliyya</i>) all of them</li> </ol>

**Table 5.3. Nature of *al-Raḥmah* by God *al-Rabb* in the Story of Ibrāhīm.**

Nature of <i>al-Raḥmah</i>	
To Ibrahīm	To Ibrāhīm's Father
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Al-Raḥmah</i> in creating and maintaining.</li> <li>2. <i>Al-Raḥmah</i> in granting special statuses in the eyes of God.</li> <li>3. <i>Al-Raḥmah</i> in the granting righteous kinship/progeny.</li> </ol>	<p>God as <i>al-Raḥmān</i> to his unbelieving creation by granting him:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Al-Raḥmah</i> of guidance.</li> <li>2. <i>Al-Raḥmah</i> of a righteous child.</li> </ol>

<sup>748</sup> Qur'ān 19:49-50

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS

This concluding chapter will incorporate a summary of key research findings. The research aims and questions stated in the 'Introduction' chapter of the thesis become the foundation for these findings. Additionally, it will discuss its value and contribution while reviewing limitations during the research and proposing opportunities for future research. The thesis started with questioning how the first three narratives of *sūrah* Maryam manifest the concept of *al-raḥmah*. It also introduced that *sūrah* Maryam repeats the name of God *al-Raḥmān* sixteen times and the word *raḥmah* four times throughout its verses. This exhibition indicates the importance of the connection between these two words with two of the possible purposes of this *sūrah*: to confirm the attribute of God *al-Raḥmān*,<sup>749</sup> and that the whole *sūrah* is a manifestation of the attribution of the concept of *al-raḥmah* to God.<sup>750</sup> In our study, this transposes into the divine expression and realization of the concept of *al-raḥmah* in the first three narratives of *sūrah* Maryam.

The thesis aims to discover how these narratives in *sūrah* Maryam project the concept of *al-raḥmah* precisely and whether understanding it based on the definition of mercy in English can complete the equation. En route to this journey to discovery, the research uncovered that the meanings of *al-raḥmah* in the related verses highly depend on the relationships between many factors. In this case, Al-Raḥmah consists of its players: its bestower and receiver, along with their actions and personalities. In this case, all three stories project God as the lord (al-Rabb) who bestows *al-raḥmah* prerogatively and his

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<sup>749</sup> Ibn `Āshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 16:59-60.

<sup>750</sup> Al-Biqā`ī, *Naẓm al-Durar*, 12:156.

selected slaves, *al-'ibād*, as its receivers and as the ones who are necessarily in need of it (*al-marḥūmūn*).<sup>751</sup>

In the case of three related narratives, *al-rahmah* descends in situations deemed utterly impossible by the human mind. The three main characters, Zakariyyā, Maryam, and Ibrāhīm, were all given righteous children despite being in physical conditions unsupportive of procreation. In the case of Zakariyyā, his wife has always been barren while he himself was at an advanced golden age. Maryam was a devoted slave of God, a virgin, when he received her son 'Īsā. Ibrāhīm was also at a very advanced age when he received his son Ishāq from whom his grandson Ya'qūb was then born, both of them as divine gifts.<sup>752</sup> However, divine *al-rahmah* here does not manifest through this specific act of God only but is also projected internally within the relationships between righteous children - in this context: Yaḥya, 'Īsā, and Ibrāhīm - and their parents. These children are devoted, gentle, and loving, far from rudeness and stubbornness, they protect them from possible harm in this world and the next, and they are pleasing. These *extraordinary slaves ('ibād)* are God-conscious (*taqiy*) and loyal to the one God, never losing hope in Him. The characteristics of their children become the source of happiness for them, a source of mercy and blessings that brings safety and joy abundantly. This *rahmah* also manifests in the shifting roles of its receivers, transforming them into parents in impossible situations, permitting them to be a part of the long lineage of life, that of humanity. God further makes this gift of *rahmah* spread outward, in a sense that these creations carry special missions of God for the salvation of humankind in this world and the next, the mission of spreading divine guidance. These actions confirm and strengthen the unique characteristic of al-Raḥmān while demonstrating that all of His creations inevitably come to Him as His slaves, and not more. This conclusion is in line with the end of *sūrah Maryam*: “*In Kullu man fī al-samāwāti wa al-arḍi illa ātī al-Raḥmāna 'abdā*” (There is no one in the heavens and earth but that he comes to the Most Merciful as a servant).<sup>753</sup>

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<sup>751</sup> al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety-Nine*, 52.

<sup>752</sup> Aḥmad ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' Fatāwī, Kitāb al-Tafsīr al-Juz al-Thānī min sūrah al-A'raf ilā sūrah al-Zumar*, vol.15 (Madīnah al-Munāwarah: Majmū'ah al-Malik Fahd li Ṭabā'ati al-Muḥafī al-Sharīf, 2004). As also mentioned by Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328) in his *Majmū' al-Fatāwī* “This *sūrah* is the *sūrah* of al-mawāhib (gifts). Allāh gifts his Prophets righteous progenies, virtuous actions, and beneficial knowledge.”

<sup>753</sup> Qur'ān 19:93.

What entitled Zakariyyā, Maryam, and Ibrāhīm with divine *al-raḥmah* of gifts of righteous children is their actions and commitment purely to God. Thus, this *raḥmah* comes after its receivers' certain gestures. The verses of *sūrah* Maryam portray Zakariyyā's earnest beseechment for God's sake, and so did Maryam's devotion to Him by preserving her purity, innocence, and worship. Likewise, Ibrāhīm's exemplary gestures showing mercy towards his insolent father ended with his sacrifice of leaving him and his people for the sake of preserving *al-tawḥīd* (oneness of God) also enables him to deserve this divine *al-raḥmah*.

In addition to the above two manifestations of divine *al-raḥmah*, the study also establishes the connection between the attribute of God *al-Raḥmān* and this divine *al-raḥmah* which paints these narratives. God as *al-Raḥmān* manifests it by creating the chain of humankind through the womb, which guards and nourishes these gifts (*hibāt*) of righteous children in all three stories by fashioning them into life, including the child who has no father, 'Īsā. This understanding parallels the womb's derivation from the attribute of God *al-Raḥmān* mentioned in one of the prophetic sayings.<sup>754</sup> The narratives in *sūrah* Maryam thus reflect *al-raḥmah* as the essence of God, that He is the possessor of *al-raḥmah*, that *al-raḥmah* of the One who owns the name *al-Raḥmān* is beyond His creations', and that it is the most comprehensive of its kind. With this *raḥmah*, God loves people, creates them, and equips them with the necessities for their salvation, making them happy in the next world and giving them the privilege of seeing His noble face there.<sup>755</sup> In this case, *al-raḥmah* connotes the complete creation process, from the intention to create it to its facilitation in life, from beginning to end.<sup>756</sup> Finally, it is insufficient to understand *al-raḥmah* in *sūrah* Maryam as simply mercy in English. Yes, it includes the notion of mercy that the *raḥmah* fills in a necessity or alleviates some difficulties in all three cases. However, it also provides other deeper meanings than that, as discussed.

This study has led the researcher to understand the role and importance of contextual analysis in fathoming the mechanisms the meanings of *al-raḥmah* should be investigated

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<sup>754</sup> Al-Fākihī, *Fawā'id Abī Muḥammad al-Fākihī*, 473; See also section 3.4 of this thesis.

<sup>755</sup> Al-Ghazālī, *The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God*, 54.

<sup>756</sup> Ibn 'Arabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikām*, 178.

and conceptualized. These fundamental research findings link strongly to context considerations, such as repeated words and relevant beginning and ending verses which relate to the formation of the meanings of *al-raḥmah* in a particular space in a *sūrah*.

Here, the researcher found that each story consisted of specific sets of verses, while many repeated words such as the words *rabb*, *'abd*, *al-Raḥmān*, *raḥmah*, *dhikr* (and its derivatives), *wahaba* (he gifted), and *salām*, amongst the many, were often shared between narratives. Grouping these sets of verses (by treating them as data and coding them along the way) becomes utmost beneficial in uncovering the sub-themes they carry, filling up any missing pieces which may exist during the pinpointing process of the overall modalities and components of *al-raḥmah*. This step was particularly beneficial in the comparative analysis section with the other *sūrahs* containing similar narratives. This research stands apart from the others as it enables the readers to extract the meaning of *al-raḥmah* by noticing similarities between patterns and familiar vocabulary throughout the sets of related verses while matching their characteristics with the fundamental attributes, signs, and connotations of *al-raḥmah*, linguistically and non-linguistically. This approach is an extra step taken above and beyond - although still connected to - understanding the concept of *al-raḥmah* based on library research using classical and non-classical books of exegeses explaining verses that specifically contain the words *raḥmah* (or its derivatives) or the *al-Raḥmān* in the *sūrah*. Hence the study also demonstrates the importance of understanding Qur'ānic verses thematically, that the meanings of a verse – thus why some vocabularies are placed in there particularly - cannot be understood comprehensively without considering under which umbrellas of themes it falls at the same time.

Albeit having said all of the above, this humble study contains many limitations which mandate future researchers to explore the rest of the aspects of *raḥmah* in the *sūrah* that this study has not delivered, including, but not limited to:

- a. Conducting a deeper analysis of the meanings of *al-Raḥmah* in *sūrah Maryam* from the viewpoint of the science of Arabic rhetoric (al-Balāghah).

- b. The meanings of *al-raḥmah* in the rest of the verses containing the word *al-Raḥmān*, since the *sūrah* repeats this attribute sixteen times, the most amongst the rest of the Qur'ānic *sūrahs*.
- c. Exploring the possible answers to the question as to why God chooses to use His attribute *al-Raḥmān*, even in verses that mention punishments and tribulations.
- d. The meanings contained in the rest of the stories of the prophets after prophet Ibrāhīm's narration.
- e. The possible connections between the verses' unique rhyming and echoing (*sajʿ*) and the concept of divine *raḥmah* in this *sūrah*.
- f. The possible connections between the concepts of *al-raḥmah* and *al-līn* (gentleness) felt throughout the *sūrah*.
- g. The relationship between the notion of *al-raḥmah* in these Qur'anic stories and the biblical and Jewish narratives.
- h. The connections between its other oft-repeated words and the theme of *al-raḥmah*.

*Wallahu a'lam bi al-ṣawāb*, God knows which is most accurate. *Wa ākhīru da'wānā wa al-ḥamdu lillāhi Rabb al-`ālamīn*, and to God belongs all praises and glory.



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