



Interpretation of Ibrahim's Wife Laughter in Al-Qur'an Story from The Gabriel Said Reynolds Perspective

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Abstract

The story of Prophet Ibrahim is one of the most frequently told stories in the Qur'an. This article aims to analyze Gabriel Said Reynolds' interpretation that highlights the aspect of Prophet Ibrahim's wife's laughter found in the Qur'an. This study uses a qualitative approach to the literature review type. This study found that 1) Reynolds shows that the laughter of Prophet Abraham's wife, Siti Sarah, can be understood in two ways: as an expression of joy or astonishment. From Reynolds's perspective, laughter also shows Sarah's disbelief in the good news delivered by the angels. Reynolds offers an interpretation that differs from the perspectives of most Islamic scholars. Reynolds is a linguist and historian of Christianity, so he provides an outsider's view of the Qur'an. Nevertheless, Reynolds' interpretation still provides an interesting insight into the story of Prophet Abraham and how interpretations can vary depending on the perspective used. 2) The story of Prophet Abraham shows the importance of trust in and loyalty to God. However, through Reynolds's interpretation, we can also understand that trust itself can sometimes be questioned and understood in different ways. In this case, the laughter of Prophet Ibrahim's wife reminds us that trust in God can be expressed in many ways, including through expressions of joy or disbelief.

Contribution: This study enriches Qur'anic interpretation by showing that Sarah's laughter has diverse meanings based on linguistic and historical perspectives.

Keywords: The Laughter of Prophet Ibrahim's Wife, Gabriel Said Reynolds, Interpretation, Qur'anic Story.

Abstrak

Kisah Nabi Ibrahim merupakan salah satu kisah yang sering diceritakan dalam Al-Qur'an. Artikel ini bertujuan menganalisis interpretasi Gabriel Said Reynolds yang menyoroti aspek tawa istri Nabi Ibrahim yang terdapat dalam Al-Qur'an. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berjenis kajian pustaka. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa: 1) Reynolds menunjukkan bahwa tawa istri Nabi Ibrahim, Siti Sarah, dapat dipahami dalam dua cara: sebagai ekspresi kegembiraan atau keheranan. Dalam perspektif Reynolds, tawa tersebut juga menunjukkan ketidakpercayaan Sarah terhadap kabar baik yang disampaikan oleh para malaikat. Reynolds menawarkan interpretasi yang berbeda dari perspektif kebanyakan ulama Islam. Reynolds adalah seorang ahli bahasa dan sejarawan agama Kristen, sehingga ia memberikan pandangan dari sudut pandang luar terhadap Al-Qur'an. Namun demikian, interpretasi Reynolds tetap memberikan wawasan yang menarik tentang kisah Nabi Ibrahim dan bagaimana interpretasi dapat berbeda-beda tergantung dari sudut pandang yang digunakan. 2) Kisah Nabi Ibrahim menunjukkan pentingnya kepercayaan dan kesetiaan terhadap Tuhan. Namun, melalui interpretasi Reynolds, kita juga dapat memahami bahwa terkadang kepercayaan itu sendiri dapat dipertanyakan dan dipahami dengan cara yang berbeda-beda. Dalam hal ini, tawa istri Nabi Ibrahim menjadi sebuah bentuk pengingat bahwa kepercayaan terhadap Tuhan dapat diungkapkan dalam berbagai cara, termasuk melalui ekspresi kegembiraan atau ketidakpercayaan.

Kontribusi: Penelitian ini memperkaya tafsir Al-Qur'an dengan menunjukkan bahwa tawa Siti Sarah memiliki makna beragam berdasarkan perspektif linguistik dan historis.





Kata Kunci: Tawa Istri Nabi Ibrahim, Gabriel Said Reynods, Interpretasi, Kisah Al-Qur'an

Introduction

The Qur'an is the holy book for Muslims and is considered the ultimate guide to life. It contains stories and teachings that inspire and give deep meaning to Muslims around the world.¹ One of the stories contained in the Qur'an is the story of Prophet Ibrahim's wife, known as "laughter." The story of laughter, the wife of Prophet Ibrahim, has been the subject of much debate among Muslim scholars. Some of them question the meaning and context of the story in the Qur'an. Therefore, in this scholarly journal article, the author will provide an "outsider's" interpretation of the story of Tawa in the Qur'an.²

In this article, I will present an interpretation of Prophet Ibrahim's wife's laughter in the Qur'ān from the perspective of Gabriel Said Reynolds, a Qur'ānic studies expert and professor at the University of Notre. Reynolds takes a new approach to Qur'ānic interpretation, using outside perspectives to understand and interpret Islam's sacred text.³ Through this approach, Reynolds presents a unique and fresh take of the story of laughter in the Qur'ān. In this article, explore Reynolds' interpretation of the story of Prophet Ibrahim's wife Laughter in the Qur'ān and see how an outsider's view can provide an exciting new understanding of Islam's sacred text.

The translation and interpretation of the Qur'ān by non-Muslim outsiders has been ongoing for a long time. The first translation of the Qur'ān into a European language was completed in the 12th century AD by Robert Ketton.⁴ At that time, they were interested because the Qur'ān contained verses that intersected with themes found in Jewish and Christian texts, so they wanted to know the similarities and differences between scriptures. In addition, at that time, where the atmosphere of the crusades was still felt, there was a political and apologetic atmosphere; namely, this translation they wanted to defend the religion generally adopted by European society by criticizing aspects of the Qur'an.

¹ Halimah Basri et al., "Inheritance Rights of Women in Makassar Society: A Study of Living Qur'an and Its Implications for Islamic Law," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 6, no. 2 (October 3, 2022): 537–55, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v6i2.13882>.

² M. Zaenal Abidin, *Cerita Al Qur'an* (WahyuMedia, 2007).

³ Gabriel Said Reynolds, *The Qur'an and Its Biblical Subtext*, vol. 10 (Routledge, 2010).

⁴ Thomas E. Burman, "Tafsīr and Translation: Traditional Arabic Qur'ān Exegesis and the Latin Qur'āns of Robert of Ketton and Mark of Toledo," *Speculum* 73, no. 3 (1998): 703–32.





Gabriel Said Reynolds is an orientalist or now more popularly known as a western scholar, he is an assistant professor of Islamic studies and theology at the University of Notre Dame (USA). Some of his works are *Muslim Theologians in the Sectarian Milieu: 'Abd al-Jabbār and the Critique of Christian Origins* (Leiden 2004), and *The Qur'ān in Its Historical Context* (London, 2008). One of his most popular works is *The Qur'ān and Its Biblical Subtext*, which contains Qur'ānic studies, one of which will be discussed in this paper, namely the laughter of Prophet Ibrahim's wife in the Qur'ān.

The background research for this article is the writing produced by Ahmad Fauzi, "Variae Lectiones (Qirā'āt) in the Perspective of Gabriel Said Reynolds,"⁵ found that Gabriel Said Reynolds said that the variation of readings in the Ottoman Manuscripts was caused by reading speculation carried out by ancient quran readers because of the absence of dots and diacritical marks in the available text, so that readers were free to sound out words according to their wishes. Reynolds also claims that many qiraats outside the Ottoman Manuscripts were used by mufassirs to justify their interpretation. Through this research, the author concludes that Gabriel Said Reynolds doubts the authenticity of the qiraat in Ottoman Manuscripts.

Reynolds's 'view is interesting because the meaning contained in the Qur'an is very dependent on the variation of reading, so that the difference in reading variations will cause differences in the way mufassir interprets it. However, the research conducted by Ahmad Fauzi has not focused on the topic of the meaning of the laughter of Prophet Ibrahim's wife contained in the Qur'an.

In addition to Ahmad Fauzi's research, there is research conducted by Zulhamdani, "Homiletics of the Qur'an Reflections on the Thought of Gabriel Said Reynolds,"⁶ states that there are indications in the Quran that its early listeners were familiar with the biblical narrative. Therefore, the Qur'anic concept of homiletics has reason to connect the Qur'an with pre-Quranic literature. However, seeing the Quran as homily to-biblical literature would narrow down the rich and complex content of the Quran. Furthermore, the independence of the Quran will also be limited under the umbrella of the pre-Quranic literature, which is considered a speculative

⁵ Ahmad Fauzi, "Variae Lectiones (Qirā'āt) Dalam Perspektif Gabriel Said Reynolds:," *Al Furqan: Jurnal Ilmu Al Quran Dan Tafsir* 2, no. 1 (June 16, 2019): 44–64.

⁶ Zulhamdani Zulhamdani, "Homiletika Al-Qur'an Refleksi Atas Pemikiran Gabriel Said Reynolds," *Khazanah Multidisiplin* 4, no. 1 (February 3, 2023): 50–70, <https://doi.org/10.15575/kl.v4i1.23684>.





subtext. This is based on Said Reynold's opinion, which views the conversation between the Quran and the Bible as a form of Quranic homily in producing its own religious messages based on the biblical literature it alludes to. This idea is a response to mainstream Quranic studies, which tend to rely on the biography and interpretation of the Prophet Muhammad to understand the Quran. Zulhamdi's research is the basic reinforcement for the article that the author did, as a paradigm for placing Said Reynolds in interpreting the laughter of Prophet Ibrahim's wife when she received a revelation from God.

This article interprets the meaning of the laughter of Prophet Ibrahim's wife in the Qur'an from the perspective of Gabriel Said Reynolds using a literature review approach.⁷ According to Sugiyono, a literature study is a theoretical study, references, and other scientific literature related to culture, values, and norms that develop in the social situation under study.⁸ Thus, in this literature review, the author is not just a "compiler," but the author acts as an "analytical and critical thinker," so that the author will be able to meld various concepts in the reference to be combined with data analysis into a partly modified or fully modified theory.⁹ In the context of this research, the author uses a literature review as an occum knife to criticize Said Reynold's interpretation of the laughter of Prophet Ibrahim's wife in the Qur'anic story.

Gabriel Said Reynolds's Thoughts

The story of Ibrahim's life journey is interesting to learn. This story describes a child who was born in the midst of a family and society full of polytheism. However, Prophet Ibrahim was preserved from the act of shirk because Allah SWT has kept him from the act of shirk committed by his family and people. Allah SWT wants Prophet Ibrahim to become a Prophet and Messenger in the future who will convey His message to humans who are blind in matters of divinity. In addition, at that time, there was a very despotic king named Namruz.¹⁰

⁷ Muhammad Rijal Fadli, "Memahami Desain Metode Penelitian Kualitatif," *Humanika, Kajian Ilmiah Mata Kuliah Umum* 21, no. 1 (2021): 33–54.

⁸ Natalina Nilamsari, "Memahami Studi Dokumen Dalam Penelitian Kualitatif," *WACANA: Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Komunikasi* 13, no. 2 (2014): 177–81.

⁹ Perdy Karuru, "Pentingnya Kajian Pustaka Dalam Penelitian," *Jurnal Keguruan Dan Ilmu Pendidikan* 2, no. 1 (2013): 1–9.

¹⁰ AL SYARIF H. SARTO and Fadlil Munawwar Manshur, "Metode Pendidikan Profetik Dalam Al-Qur'an: Kajian Ayat-Ayat Kisah Nabi Ibrahim As," *Metode*, 2005, 57.





Prophet Ibrahim is a prophet of the Samawi religion. He was titled Khalilullah (God's favorite). This is stated in the Qur'an: However, the Qur'ānic focus and discussion of Prophet Abraham is not limited to the study of monotheism alone. However, the Qur'ānic focus and discussion on Prophet Abraham is not limited to the study of monotheism alone. The story of the speech of Isaac, Abraham's son, has in the same way a prominent place in the Qur'an. In three different places, the Qur'ān refers to this narrative, most fully in surah al-Hud verses 69 to 72:

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِالْبُشْرَى قَالُوا سَلَامًا قَالَ سَلَّمَ فَمَا لَبِثَ أَنْ جَاءَ بِعِجْلٍ حَنِيذٍ فَلَمَّا رَأَى أَيْدِيَهُمْ لَا تَصِلُ إِلَيْهِ نَكِرَهُمْ وَأَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيفَةً قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَى قَوْمِ لُوطٍ وَامْرَأَتُ قَائِمَةٌ فَضَحِكَتْ فَلَبَسَ رُهَا بِإِسْحَاقَ وَمِنْ وَرَاءِ إِسْحَاقَ يَعْقُوبَ قَالَتْ يَوَيْلَ لِيَ وَالِدٍ وَأَنَا عَجُوزٌ وَهَذَا بَعْلِي شَيْخًا إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عَجِيبٌ

"Indeed, our messengers (angels) came to Ibrahim with glad tidings, saying: "Congratulations." Ibrahim replied: "Congratulations," so he served them roasted calf meat. Seventy So, when he saw that their hands did not touch it, Ibrahim looked at them strangely and was afraid of them. The angel said: "Fear not, we are the ones sent to the people of Luth." 71 And his wife stood up (behind the curtain) and smiled, so We gave her the glad tidings of the birth of Isaac, and of Isaac (his son) Ya'qub. 72 His wife said, ' It is astonishing that I should bear a son when I am an old woman, and this is my husband who is also an old man. Surely this is indeed a very strange thing."

Some of the previous books of interpretation, such as Tafsir Ibn Kathir, state that the above verses can be identified as follows: First, Allah SWT. Sent several messengers in the form of angels (they consist of angels) who were handsome and brought good news about the birth of Prophet Ishaq. Meanwhile, Prophet Ibrahim served the guests as roast beef. Not until they were the guests of Prophet Ibrahim talked to Prophet Ibrahim, Prophet Ibrahim who had welcomed the guests with joy turned into fear because he saw the strangeness of his guests, namely not touching the dishes served at all.¹¹ When the angels learned of Prophet Ibrahim's fear they said,

¹¹ Basri Mahmud, "Isra'iliyat Dalam Tafsir Al-Thabari," *AI-MUNZIR* 8, no. 2 (March 15, 2018): 157–78, <https://doi.org/10.31332/am.v8i2.742>.





do not be afraid of O Ibrahim, we were sent to destroy the people of Prophet Luth for their sins.¹²

Another explanation in the Book of Tafsir Ibn Kathir is that Prophet Ibrahim slaughtered a calf, then roasted it on the coals; after cooking, he served it to them. Prophet Ibrahim sat with them, while Sarah - his wife - served the guests. This happened while his wife was standing and Ibrahim was sitting (with them).¹³ In fact, according to the qiraat of Ibn Mas'ud, it is mentioned that there is an additional sentence; "So when Ibrahim served them their food, Ibrahim said, "You may eat.". They said, "O Ibrahim, we will not eat anything unless we pay a price for it." Ibrahim said, "Surely even this food has a price." They asked, "What is the price?" Ibrahim said, "You mention the name of Allah at the beginning, then you praise Him at the end." So Jibril looked at Mikail and said, "This man deserves to be made by his Lord His beloved." Therefore, when he saw that their hands did not touch him, Ibrahim looked at them strangely (Hud: 70).¹⁴

When the Prophet Ibrahim, As. saw that they (his guests) did not want to eat his food, he was surprised, and there was fear in his heart towards them. However, this was not the case for Sarah (Prophet Ibrahim's wife). When she saw that Ibrahim a.s. had honored them, she rose to serve them with a friendly smile and said, "How strange our guests are, we serve them directly as our respect for them, but they do not want to eat our dish."¹⁵

Ibn Abu Hatim said that 'Ali ibn Husayn narrated to us that Nasr ibn 'Ali narrated to us that Noah ibn Qais narrated to us from Usman ibn Muhaisin that the guests of Prophet Ibrahim were four angels: Gabriel, Mikail, Israfil and Rafa'il. Noah ibn Qais said that Noah ibn Abu Shaddad alleged that when they entered the house of Prophet Ibrahim, and he served them a roasted calf, Jibril wiped it with his wings. The calf then returned to life and rose after its mother, who was not far from the prophet's house.¹⁶

That is, they said, ' Do not fear us; we are angels sent to the people of the Prophet Lut to destroy them. Sarah smiled at the good news of their destruction because they were causing a

¹² Andreas Kristianto and Daniel K. Listijabudi, "The Story of Luth and the Crimes of Sodomites: A Cross-Textual of the Qur'an and the Bible," *Theologia in Loco* 3, no. 1 (April 30, 2021): 82–115, <https://doi.org/10.55935/thilo.v3i1.212>.

¹³ Norman Calder, "Tafsir from Ṭabarī to Ibn Kathīr: Problems in the Description of a Genre, Illustrated with Reference to the Story of Abraham 1," in *Approaches to the Qur'an* (Routledge, 1993).

¹⁴ Bradley J. Cook, "The Book of Abraham and the Islamic Qisas Al-Anbiya"(Tales of the Prophets)," n.d.

¹⁵ Norman Calder, "From Midrash To Scripture: The Sacrifice Of Abraham In Early Islamic Tradition," in *The Qur'an*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 1999).

¹⁶ Nadia, "Telaah Struktural Hermeneutik Kisah Nabi Ibrahim Dalam Alquran."





lot of damage, and their disbelief and denial were too heavy. This is why Sarah was rewarded with good news, namely with the birth of a son, even though Sarah had long despaired of having a child. Qatadah said that Sarah smiled and wondered when people were visited with punishment while they were in a state of negligence.¹⁷ So, there are questions about several points in the verses above, one of which is that the laughter of Prophet Ibrahim's wife, Sarah, was because she heard the good news about the coming (birth) of Ishaq or the coming of the punishment that would be revealed to the people of Prophet Luth As.

Problems of the Mufasirs Regarding the Laughter of Prophet Ibrahim's Wife

Regarding the laughter of Prophet Ibrahim's wife, most Western scholarly commentators interpret based on the rules of the Qur'anic text: Marmaduke Pickthall: "And his wife, stood laughing when We gave her good news."¹⁸ Yusuf Ali: "And his wife stood there, and she laughed: But we gave her glad tidings." Blachère: "La femme [d'Abraham] rit, debout, tandis qu'il était assis,²³² et Nous lui annonçames."¹⁹ Arberry: "And his wife was standing; she was laughing, so we gave her good news." Paret: "Seine Frau, die dabeistand, lachte. Da verkündeten wir ihr."²⁰ Fakhry: "His wife was standing, and he laughed. After that, we announced her good news." Abdel Haleem: "his wife stood nearby and laughed. We gave him the good news."²¹

Of the several opinions of the mufasirs, only Pickthall seems to use "when" which describes Abraham's wife's laughter as a result of the messengers' announcement. Yusuf Ali, quite on the contrary, seems to suggest by the use of "but" that the announcement took place despite her laughter. By using "therefore" Arberry implies that the announcement was a response to (or a reward for) her laughter. Otherwise, the translators simply follow the Qur'ānic word order, which links the two events without implying a causal relationship.

¹⁷ Hidayatullah Hidayatullah, "Konsep Karakter Kepemimpinan Nabi Ibrahim AS Dalam Membentuk SDM Unggulan Perspektif Al-Qur'an," *Al-Wasathiyah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 1, no. 2 (September 15, 2022): 66–86, <https://doi.org/10.56672/alwasathiyah.v1i2.25>.

¹⁸ Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Quran* (E. Salehi, 1900).

¹⁹ Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an* (Wordsworth Editions, 2000).

²⁰ William Montgomery Watt, *Companion to the Qur'an: Based on the Arberry Translation*, vol. 10 (Routledge, 2013).

²¹ Muhammad Abdel Haleem and M. A. S. Abdel Haleem, *Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and Style* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010).





The translators' reluctance to attribute Abraham's wife's laughter to the son's story takes into account the opinion of the majority of mufasssirs. For example, Muqatil's Tafsir explains that her laughter was not attributed to speech but rather to Abraham's "fear and dread of the three individuals. In other words, he does not realize as Abraham did that the messenger is heavenly. Hence, Abraham's anxious behavior seemed comical.²²

Qummi explains this passage with a lengthy narration of the nearby city to which the people of Luth were sent. The town was famous for its abundant fruit, and those who passed through it would inevitably steal from its orchards. As the devil sensed his frustration over this theft, he encouraged them to attack and sodomize passersby. The inhabitants of the city soon fell into hopeless depravity, and God sent Lot to warn them of his punishment. Soon afterwards, four Messengers came to Abraham, who recognized them as divine messengers and rushed to offer them hospitality. When they did not eat, Prophet Abraham's wife rebuked them to avoid eating the banquet she served.²³

At this point, they explained that they were on a mission to destroy the people of Luth and thus revealed that the guests were angels. Suddenly, the menstrual period of Prophet Ibrahim's wife arrived. This has not been the case for a very long time. In response, she covered her face with her hands as she wept and said "woe is me, " but she did not laugh. Qummy is of the opinion that what is meant by dhahikat here is hadhat or the arrival of her period. Qummy's interpretation, of course, has an interesting logic to it, as the appearance of Abraham's wives would correspond to his miraculous conception of a child in his old age. This is just one of the many explanations suggested by Pabarc. According to the initial explanation, Abraham's wives laughed when they saw their guests not eating.²⁴

According to the second explanation, he laughed when He heard that the angels were destroying the people of Lot, "happy that God's punishment has come upon those who were not noticed. "According to the third explanation (expressed with circumlocution for the sake of humility), he laughed when he realized that the visitors would not do so, which many of the

²² Muqatil bin Sulaiman, "Tafsir Muqatil Bin Sulaiman," *Ihya' al-Turost al-'Arabii* 1423 (2002).

²³ A. I. Qummi, "Tafsir Al-Qummi" (Qom: Dar Al-Kitab, 1984).

²⁴ Qummi.





people of Luth knew. The fourth explanation is from Muqatil's Tafsir, who laughed when he saw Abraham's fear of the messengers.²⁵

According to the fifth explanation regarding the laughter of the wife of Prophet Ibrahim AS when she received the good news of the birth of Ishaq and Ya'kub, that is, she laughed with joy because of the miracle that was given to her. Thabari immediately noted that this explanation contradicts the Qur'ānic word order. He provides a philological note that could solve the case (ta'khir al-muqaddam) or understand what came first. However, he avoided using such methods.²⁶

The sixth explanation is from Qummy, that Prophet Ibrahim's wife is not laughing at all in this verse but is closer to menstruation. However, Thabari opposes this interpretation. According to him, there is no second or subsequent meaning for dhahikat, which means menstruation. Finally, the seventh explanation is that the wife of Prophet Ibrahim laughed because the guests who came wanted to destroy the people of Luth, whose family would be safe from punishment by their god.²⁷

Thabari favors the explanation that Abraham's wife laughed because she was satisfied that Luth's people would be destroyed. This is the best explanation, since the last phrase in the Qur'an before the dhahikat is "Fear not we have been sent to the people of Lot", Thabari concludes: So her laughter and astonishment was only due to the infidelity of the people of Lot.²⁸ Then Zamaksyari in his interpretation explains that, the key to understanding the meaning of the meaning of the Prophet Ibrahim's wife's laughter is the fear of the Prophet Ibrahim himself. He continued, and the obvious cause was that he felt they were angry. He became suspicious of them because he feared they were coming down with his divine condemnation or punishing his people. For this reason, he explained that the angels said "do not be afraid because they saw signs of fear and change on her face. When Abraham's wife saw the fear in her husband's face, it disappeared, and later she laughed."²⁹

²⁵ bin Sulaiman, "Tafsir Muqatil Bin Sulaiman."

²⁶ Qummi, "Tafsir Al-Qummi."

²⁷ Qummi.

²⁸ Nur Aida, "Perbandingan Unsur Intrinsik Kisah Nabi Lut Antar Surat Dalam Al Quran," *EMPIRISMA: JURNAL PEMIKIRAN DAN KEBUDAYAAN ISLAM* 30, no. 2 (2021): 151–76.

²⁹ Desy Ashfirani Mudrikah and Farham Walidin, "Isyarat-Isyarat Nabi Perempuan Dalam Al-Quran (Studi Komparatif Penafsiran Ayat-Ayat Tentang Nabi Perempuan Dalam Tafsir Al-Kasyaf Dan Al-Jami' Li





Ibn Kathir explains that when the messengers did not eat the food he offered them, Abraham realized that they were angels. He continued to believe that the angels were not interested in eating. They did not want it, and they did not want the food served by Abraham and his wife. It was this realization that scared Abraham so much that he felt afraid. Regarding the laughter of Prophet Abraham's wife, he emphasized the difference from the seven explanations above. She laughed because she received good news about the birth of Ishaq. Although this contradicts her syntax regarding the announcement of good news, it is clearly a consequence of her laughter.³⁰ In contrast, Ibn Kathir is more inclined to the same opinion as that of Thabari, which is that Prophet Ibrahim's wife laughed because of the destruction of the people of Luth.

Gabriel Said Reynolds' opinion on the laughter of Prophet Ibrahim's wife

Reynolds offers an interpretation that differs from most Islamic scholars in his perspective as linguists and historians of Christianity. However, Reynolds's interpretation still provides an interesting insight into the story of Prophet Ibrahim and how interpretations can vary depending on the perspective used. This discussion also shows that belief in God can be expressed in many ways, including through expressions of joy or disbelief.³¹ In this case, the laughter of Prophet Ibrahim's wife is a reminder that the belief in God can be questioned and understood in different ways.³²

However, this discussion also raises several questions, such as whether Reynolds's 'interpretation is in line with the interpretation of the Qur'an in general and how Islamic scholars view the laughter of Ibrahim's wife. Therefore, this discussion needs to be critically considered and compared with the existing views. Overall, the discussion of the laughter of Prophet Ibrahim's wife in the Qur'ān from Gabriel Said Reynolds' perspective provides an interesting insight into how interpretations can vary depending on the perspective used and

Ahkamil Quran Lil Qurthubi),” *Al-Din: Jurnal Dakwah dan Sosial Keagamaan* 6, no. 1 (June 30, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.35673/ajdsk.v6i1.846>.

³⁰ Suci Rahmatika, “Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Tauhid Dalam Keluarga (Analisis Terhadap Surah Al-Baqarah Ayat 132-133 Dalam Tafsir Ibnu Katsir),” *Tarbiya Islamica* 4, no. 1 (2016): 18–28, <https://doi.org/10.37567/ti.v4i1.1395>.

³¹ Gabriel Said Reynolds, *New Perspectives on the Qur'an: The Qur'an in Its Historical Context 2* (Routledge, 2012).

³² Gabriel Said Reynolds, *Reading The Qur'an As Homily: The Case Of Sarah'S Laughter* (Brill, 2009), https://brill.com/display/book/edcoll/9789047430322/Bej.9789004176881.i-864_021.xml.





reminds us that belief in God can be questioned and understood in different ways. However, Reynolds' interpretation needs to be compared with other existing views to gain a fuller understanding of the story of Prophet Ibrahim in the Qur'an.³³

However, there are signs that the Qur'ān is talking to the Biblical story that made Sarah laugh when she heard Ishaq. In the beginning, the Qur'ān follows quite closely here the sequence of the Biblical Story, from the visit of the messengers to Abraham. Abraham (Gn 18.1-16; Q 11.69-73), to Abraham's plea for Lot's people (Gn 18.17-33; Q 11.74-6), to the destruction of Lot's people (Gn 19.1-29; Q 11.77-83). As such, the Qur'ān does not copy the Bible completely; instead, it develops its own homilies or religious exhortations, using references to biblical stories along the way. This shows that the Qur'ān assumes that the audience is already familiar with this story.³⁴ Thus. It makes perfect sense for the Qur'an to allude to Sarah's laughter without any detailed explanation. It is also reasonable for the Qur'an to mention laughter before the announcement of Ishaq's birth, and to expect the reader to still understand that the annunciation came at the beginning, as revealed by Thabari.

In fact, the Qur'ān has good literary reasons for doing so: For here as elsewhere the Qur'ān follows a rhyme scheme (ar. fasila) according to the last syllable of the last word of each verse. Which is characterized by 'i' or 'u' rhyme; *bi 'ijlin (69) qaumi luth (70), ... (71) la-syaiun 'ajib (72); hamidun majid (73)*. However, the statement *fa-dhahikat* broke this scheme. In this case, the name, Ishaq. For this reason, the Qur'ān takes the extraordinary step of adding Jacob Sarah's grandson to the final utterance. In Jewish and Christian scriptural accounts of this thanksgiving (and indeed in the other sayings that follow it), all that appears is about the birth of his son. The other two Qur'ānic verses that allude to this speak only of a son (*ghulam*).³⁵

However, by adding the word Ya'kub in surah Hud (*wa warai ishaq ya'kub*) the meaning of the saying was not changed but developed and the Qur'ānic rhyme scheme was adhered to. However, the Qur'ān still follows the style of the language found in biblical scriptures and taurat. For example, the biblical account of the arrival of three men to Abraham is referred to in

³³ Gabriel Said Reynolds, *The Qur'an and the Bible: Text and Commentary* (Yale University Press, 2018).

³⁴ Zulhamdani, "Homiletika Al-Qur'an Refleksi Atas Pemikiran Gabriel Said Reynolds."

³⁵ Reynolds, *Reading The Qur'an As Homily*.





the Qur'ān by the word messenger from God. However, this allusion is entirely in keeping with the Jewish and Christian stories.

In surah Hud the Qur'ān clearly states that the three messengers who came to Abraham did not want the food that was served, a rather extraordinary statement since the Bible clearly states that they ate while he remained standing near them under the tree (Gn 18.8). However, in other scriptures, there is a verse to confirm that the angels did not eat. Later in the Torah, in the story where the angel Raphael recently revealed his true identity after a long trip to Iran with Tobias, he announced, "You think you have seen me eat, but it's an appearance and nothing more". That is, Judge Yahweh's angel visited Manoah to foretell Samson's birth: Manoah asked the visitor to accept his hospitality: "Allow us to detain you while we prepare a child for you" (Judges 13.15). The angel replied, "Even if you detain me, I must not eat your food" (Verse 16).³⁶

The anti-anthropomorphic view of angel Manoah appears in the Jewish and Christian exegesis of Genesis 18. Philo, Josephus, and Justin Martyr all argued that the angel who visited Abraham did not actually eat. The story is revealed in Luke's gospel during his journey to Emmaus, where he meets Jesus, who then eats a meal. Thus, the Qur'ānic view of the nature of Abraham's visitors is common to both Jewish and Christian texts that share similarities. However, regarding the question of Sarah's laughter, Jews and Christians differ. Jews say that Sarah's laughter was due to the news brought by the guest that Sarah would be pregnant with Ishaq. In Bibel, Sarah's laughter was because she was a descendant of the holy Maryam. This is why she was happy laughing while jumping.³⁷

In Gabriel's opinion, given the mention of Sarah or Maryam on which the Qur'ān bases its reference to Sarah's laughter must also be understood. That the Qur'ān is complimentary towards Maryam, the Qur'ān preserves her from the slander of the Jews (Q 4.156), alludes to her sinless birth (Q 3.36-7) and describes her as a sign of the world (Q 21.91). Maryam is not simply the only woman the Qur'an mentions by name. According to the Qur'an, the perfect woman: "The angels said, O Maryam, God chose you and He has chosen you over the women of the world" (Q 3.42). As in the Syriac Bible, Sarah's laughter in the Qur'an cannot be understood in the light of the Hebrew word play, because in Arabic the word dhahika taken

³⁶ Gabriel Said Reynolds, *The Qur'anic Sarah As Prototype Of Mary* (Brill, 2007), https://brill.com/display/book/9789047411703/Bej.9789004155589.i-421_012.xml.

³⁷ Reynolds, *The Qur'anic Sarah As Prototype Of Mary*.





from the root letters 'd-h-k' does not correspond to the name Ishaq. Instead, her laughter and indeed her speech to Sarah as a whole must be understood as anticipation of the angel's announcement to Maryam.³⁸

Conclusion

This article provides the insight that interpretations can vary depending on the perspective used. However, it needs to be compared with other existing views to gain a fuller understanding of the story of Prophet Ibrahim in the Qur'ān. This article also points out that the Qur'ān uses references to biblical stories and follows a rhyme scheme in its use of language. The Qur'ān also adds the word Ya'kub in surah Hud to adhere to the rhyme scheme and develops the speech about the birth of Ishaq. The article concludes that this discussion shows that beliefs in God can be questioned and understood in different ways.

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³⁸ Emran El-Badawi and Gabriel Said Reynolds, "The Qur'an and the Syriac Bible" (Oxford Islamic Studies Online, accessed, 2013).





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