

PARALLEL FRAMEWORK OF MUḤAMMAD AND MOSES'S STORY: AN ANALYSIS OF THE NARRATIVES OF ḤALĪMAH AL-SA'DIYYAH

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Abstrak:

Kajian modern tentang asal-usul sirah Nabawiyah telah menelusuri dan menemukan keberadaan pengaruh kitab suci sebelumnya dan unsur-unsurnya dalam narasi sirah. Kisah tentang Halimah, sang ibu susuan, menurut Raven, menunjukkan kejadian paralel dengan kematangan Yesus ketika bayi, dalam Injil. Selain itu, para sarjana Muslim seperti Ibn Hisham ditemukan konsisten dalam membuat perbandingan paralel antara Muhammad dan Musa dalam karyanya. Tulisan ini memfokuskan pada kehidupan awal yang terfokus pada periode Ḥalimah al-Sa'diyyah dengan menganalisis penggunaan referensi Al-Quran dalam narasi. Penelitian ini bersifat kualitatif dengan metode pendekatan kritis dan analisis tekstual untuk membaca cerita. Kajian ini menemukan proposisi bahwa ada dua kemungkinan alasan yang mengarahkan Ibn Hisham menambahkan ayat 28:12 dari Al-Qur'an sebagai referensi atas catatan waktu Muhammad sebagai bayi yang menyusui. Isu pertama ketidakjelasan digital dalam narasi Ibn Isāq. Dan yang kedua adalah memberikan kepercayaan kepada kisah kedua nabi, Muhammad dan Musa.

Kata kunci: Muḥammad, Musa, Ḥalimah al-Sa'diyyah, al-Qur'an, Sirah.

Abstract:

Modern studies of the origin of sirah nabawiyah have traced and suggested the existence of influence of previous scriptures and their elements within the sirah narrative. The extraordinary speed and marks of physical maturity in Prophet Muḥammad's wet-nurse period with Halimah, which, according to Raven, indicates a parallel occurrence with Jesus' precocity in the Gospels of the Infancy. Besides, Muslim scholars such as Ibn Hishām was found to consistently make parallel comparison between Muḥammad and Moses in his work. This study aims to explore the narratives of Prophet Muḥammad's early life, with special focus to his period with Ḥalimah al-Sa'diyyah and analyse the use of Quranic reference in the narrative. The study is qualitative in nature in which the

researcher employed critical and textual analysis to examine the story. The present study in its finding proposes that there are two possible reasons which lead Ibn Hishām to adduce verse 28:12 of the Quran as his reference to the account of Muḥammad's time as a suckling infant. The first is to elucidate lexical obscurity in the narration of Ibn Ishāq. The second is to give credence to the similarity between the accounts of two prophets, Muḥammad and Moses.

Keywords: *Muḥammad, Moses, Ḥalimah al-Sa'diyyah, Quran, Sirah.*

Introduction

According to Islamic tradition, after the birth of Prophet Muḥammad, there was an event that was accompanied by various miraculous elements. His grandfather brings him to the Ka'ba to thank Allah for His gift, returns the baby back to his mother, and then seeks a wet nurse. When a group of wet nurses came to Mecca in search of their foster-son, no one agreed to take Muḥammad when they discovered that the baby was an orphan. They said: "An orphan, and what will his mother and grandfather do?"¹ Since payment was a big issue, no one agreed to take the young Muḥammad. Ibn Ishāq narrates that, Ḥalimah al-Sa'diyya too, in the first instance was reluctant to take the young Muḥammad when she discovered that he was an orphan. But then, after failing to claim for herself any foster-son, she decided to return to Muḥammad and take him. It is recorded that, after agreeing to take Muḥammad as her foster-son, her journey was accompanied by miraculous blessings.² Her breasts, which had previously been bereft of milk, immediately overflowed. What is more, the udders of the camel on which they made their journey were full instantly, allowing the whole family to benefit from its milk; her donkey, previously enervated, became active and moved far faster than before; her herd of cattle yielded more milk. In short, Ḥalimah's family were awarded with blessings from the moment that Ḥalimah took Muḥammad to her breast. This bounteous plethora of blessings was notified by her companions, who told her: "You have taken a blessed creature."

¹ Ibn Ishāq, *The Life of Muḥammad*, ed. Guillaume (Oxford University Press, 1967), p.71.

² The elements of miracles has been one of the features in *sirah nabawiyah*. See, A. S. Azmi, "Miraculous Elements in Sirah Nabawiyah: Reassessing Quranic References in the Early Islamic Literature", in *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 7(6), 2017, pp. 258-267.

This article intends to explore the role of Halimah al-Sya'diyah in the life of the Prophet Muhammad with the story of the maturity of Jesus in the Gospels when he was still in his infancy. Critical analysis is used in reading narratives about these two prophets.

Discussion

Understanding The Profile of Ḥalīmah al-Sa'diyya in the Story

The status of Ḥalīmah as a blessed wet nurse of the Prophet was consequently widely recognised in the ninth century. It has been mentioned in various sources, including the works of Abū Dāwūd,³ al-Wāqidī,⁴ Ibn Ḥabīb (245/859),⁵ Ibn Qutayba,⁶ al-Fasawī (277/890),⁷ Ibn Abī Khaythama,⁸ and al-Jāhiz.⁹ The account of Muḥammad being wet-nursed by Ḥalīmah was discussed in detail in the works of Ibn Ishāq, Ibn Hishām, Ibn Sa'd,¹⁰ al-Balādhurī,¹¹ and

³ Abū Dāwūd narrates a ḥadīth concerning how Muḥammad expresses his respect when Ḥalīma comes to visit him. The Prophet himself spread out his cloak for her so she could sit on it. See, Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, ed. al-Arnaūūt (Dār al-Risāla al-ʿIlmiyya, 2009), p.7/457.

⁴ Actually, al-Wāqidī did not include the story of Muḥammad's suckling in his *Maghāzī*. But he did confirm that Ḥalīma is the Prophet's wet-nurse when describing Muḥammad's relations with Abū Sufyān, the leader of Mecca. According to al-Wāqidī, Muḥammad is Abū Sufyan's foster-brother since they both are being wet-nursed by Ḥalīma. See, Al-Wāqidī, *Maghāzī* (Dār al-ʿAḥadīth, 1409), p.2/869.

⁵ Al-Hāshimī, Muḥammad ibn Ḥabīb Abū Ja'far al-Baghdādī, *Kitāb al-Maḥbar* (Bayrūt: Dār ʿĀfāq al-Jadīda, n.d) p. 10.

⁶ Ibn Qutayba, *al-Ma'arīf*, ed. Thawrat ʿUkāsha (al-Qāhira, 1992), p.126, 131.

⁷ Al-Fasawī, Ya'qūb ibn Sufyān al-Fārisī, al-Ma'rifa wa al-Tārikh, ed. Akram Diyā' al-'Umarī (Bayrūt: Muassasa al-Risāla, 1981), p. 3/267.

⁸ In his *al-Tārikh al-Kabīr*, Ibn Abī Khaythama records a ḥadīth that transmitted from Ḥalīma herself, in which the Prophet in his statement concedes that he has been wet-nursed in the village of Banī Sa'd, Ḥalīma's hometown. See, Ibn Abī Kaythama, *al-Tārikh al-Kabīr*, ed. Ṣālah Hilāl (al-Qāhira, 2006), p.2/816.

⁹ al-Jāhiz, *al-Ḥayawān* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1424H), p.6/331, 7/148.

¹⁰ Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, p.1/120.

¹¹ Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Asbrāf*, ed. Suhayl al-Ziriklī, (Bayrūt: Dār al-Fikr, 1996), p.1/93.

Ibn Abī ‘Āṣim.¹²

Interestingly, the blessings granted to Ḥalīmah occurred and endured solely during her period nursing Muḥammad. Apparently, the blessings and prosperity eluded her and her people after a time. When Muḥammad was already grown-up and married to Khadīja, Ibn Qutayba records an account of how Ḥalīmah came to the Prophet’s house, lamenting (*shakat*) about the drought in her homeland (*jadb al-bilād*) which had brought famine and starvation. In response to Ḥalīmah, the Prophet discussed her plight with Khadīja, and subsequently they gave Ḥalīmah 40 lambs and camel with a *bowdab* to help her.¹³ The account is also preserved by Ibrāhīm al-Ḥarbī, without mentioning the specific difficulties faced by Ḥalīmah.¹⁴

Relationship Between the Narrative and the Quran

It is worthy of note that despite there being a profusion of sources that provide information about the account of Muḥammad’s suckling with his wet nurse, not one of these connects the story with any Qur’ānic reference, except Ibn Hishām.¹⁵ In Guillaume’s translation of Ibn Ishāq’ *Sīrah*, not even Ibn Ishāq, the master of Ibn Hishām, cited the verse as reference to Muḥammad’s suckling. The narrative has been delivered in details by the scholars of *Sīrah* of the ninth century, such as Ibn Rabban and Ahmad.¹⁶ However, none of them is found to make a connection with any verse from the Qur’ān. It is obvious that

¹² Al-Shaybānī, Abū Bakr Ibn Abī ‘Āṣim, *al-Aḥād wa al-Mathānī* (al-Riyād: Dār al-Rāya, 1991), p.6/239.

¹³ Ibn Qutayba, *Gharīb al-ḥadīth*, ed. Abdullah al-Jabūrī (Baghdād: Maktaba al-‘Anī, 1397H), p.1/619.

¹⁴ Al-Ḥarbī, Ibrāhīm ibn Ishāq, *Gharīb al-ḥadīth* (Makka: Jāmi‘a Umm al-Qurā, 1405H), p.1/54.

¹⁵ There are a few references of Quranic references to the Prophet’s early life. See, Ahmad Sanusi Azmi, "The Intricate Labyrinth of Qur’ānic References in *Sīrah Nabawīyah*: An Overview of The Orientalist Works", in *Journal of Hadīth Studies* 1, no. 1 (2016), pp. 1-6.

¹⁶ See, Ahmad Sanusi Azmi, Zuhilmi Mohamed Nor, Amiruddin Mohd Sobali, Mohd Yusuf Ismail, and Amran Abdul Halim, "From Christianity to Islam: An Analysis of Ibn Rabban's Approach towards *Sīrah Nabawīyah* 1", in *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 11 (2017): 1; Ahmad Sanusi Azmi, "*Sīrah* Of The Prophet’s Early Life In Musnad of Ahmad: An Analytical Study of Qur’ānic References In *Sīrah Nabawīyah*", in *Sains Humanika* 9, no. 3 (2017).

the connection initiated by Ibn Hishām is a novel enterprise. Our observation presented in the previous chapters show that there is no scholars of *tafsīr*, *Sīrah*, *ḥadīth* and *dalā'il* of the same century who links 28:12 with the narrative of Muḥammad's nursing. The matter in question now is: what prompted Ibn Hishām to cite the verse at the beginning of the miraculous story?

Analysis: Why Did Ibn Hisham Created Quranic Connection?

In order to analyse the question, it is worth making a reference to the verse and related passages in the Qur'ān to gain a fuller context of the subject. The verse is located in the opening section of *sūra al-Qaṣaṣ*, the passage in which the story of Moses' infancy is narrated. According to Qur'ānic commentaries, Pharaoh one day was warned by his priests (*al-kahana*)¹⁷ or a warner (*ḥāzira*)¹⁸ about the upbringing of a boy (*ghulam*) who would one day bring an end to his reign. Worried about the prediction, he commanded that all new-born boys must be killed.¹⁹ The Qur'ān (28:7) reveals that God inspired Moses' mother (*wa amḥaynā ilā umm mūsā*) to place the young Moses in a chest (*al-tābūt*)²⁰ and cast him into the river (*al-yamm*) in order to protect Moses from the mass-execution (*yudhabbiḥu abnā'ahum*). The baby was then found by Āsiā, Pharaoh's wife, who was captivated by the baby and afforded him sanctuary from the massacre (*lā taqtulub*) (28:9). She tried to find him a wet nurse but failed. According to the Qur'ān, this was God's deliberate strategy, wherein He prevented Moses from acquiring any wet nurse except his own mother (28:12). This is the verse that is cited by Ibn Hishām in the narrative of Muḥammad's suckling. The verse declares: "And We had prevented from him [all] wet nurses before, so she said, "Shall I direct you to a household that will be responsible

¹⁷ See Mujāhid, *Tafsīr*, 1/522; Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, 3/336; al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, ed. Aḥmad Shākir (Muassasa al-Risāla, 2000), p.19/518.

¹⁸ Qatāda only describes it as a warner, without specifically ascribe it as a priest (*al-kāhin*). See, Yaḥyā Ibn Sallām, *Tafsīr*, 2/579; al-Ṣan'ānī, 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Tafsīr*, 2/486; al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, ed. Aḥmad Shākir (Muassasa al-Risāla, 2000), p.19/518.

¹⁹ The Qur'ān seems does not mention the details, but most of the *tafsīr* scholars interpreted verse 28:6 as denoting the warning of God of the advent of a boy who will bring to an end his reign. The interpretation is recorded in the tradition of Mujāhid (1/522), the works of Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (3/338) and Yaḥyā Ibn Sallām (2/579).

²⁰ Based on Sahih International and Yusuf Ali's translation. Pickthall translates it as 'the ark'.

for him for you while they are to him [for his upbringing] sincere?" (28:12). Obviously, there is a similar theme between both narratives, which is that the wet nurse, and the appointment of the wet nurse, is decided by God. In the Qur'ānic story of Moses' suckling, God averts (*wa ḥarramnā*) any wet nurse from being able to nurse Moses, while in the case of Muḥammad, as narrated by Ibn Ishāq, each wet nurse offered to nurse Muḥammad, but all of them refused to take the infant as their foster-son. The similarity of the theme in the account of Moses might influence a reader to view 28:12 as reminiscent of the account of the baby Muḥammad's time as a suckling infant.

The citation of 28:12 in the story of Muḥammad's suckling seems to be based on reasonable grounds. In the case of Ibn Hishām, there are two suggestions which may be offered in order to analyse the reason why 28:12 was cited in the story in the first place. The first is Ibn Hishām, who adduces the verse to cast a light on the linguistic anomaly in the statement of Ibn Ishāq, which is related to the story. It is well known that the *Sīrah* of Ibn Hishām is an abridged version of Ibn Ishāq's *Sīrah*. This was stated in the prologue of the work, in which he describes that narrates only significant or relevant facts to include in his *Sīrah*, and refrains from citing any irrelevant materials from the *Sīrah* of Ibn Ishāq. In the story of Muḥammad's time as a suckling infant, Ibn Hishām is transmitting tradition received from Ibn Ishāq. In the passage, Ibn Ishāq claims that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib searches for him (Muḥammad) a wet nurse (*al-ruḍā'a*). The word used by Ibn Ishāq for wet nurse here is *al-ruḍā'a*, which is an unusual term to use.²¹ In order to elucidate the meaning of the word '*al-ruḍā'a*', Ibn Hishām makes an aside comment in which he claims "*al-marādī*" as an explanation for the word *al-ruḍā'a*. In lending credence to this claim, he cites 28:12 to support his proposition and explanation, since the verse itself contains the same word, *al-marādī*. The word, according to Ibn Hishām, is the most apposite, since it is also mentioned in the Qur'ān. Therefore, the citation made by Ibn Hishām needs to be viewed primarily as a linguistic explanation rather than as a particularly Qur'ānic interpretation of the event. This is not the first time that Ibn Hishām makes use of the Qur'ān to elaborate upon the meaning of word he transmits. For example, in other reference, Ibn Hishām employs 6:111 to explain the apparently ambiguous meaning of a word in the poetry of

²¹ The peculiarity in the selection of word is also noticed by al-Suhaylī. He comments on the use of the word in his work. See, al-Suhaylī, *al-Rawḍ al-Unf*, ed. 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām (Bayrūt, 2000), pp.2/101-102.

Abū 'Ubayda.²²

Muḥammad and Moses: A Parallel Framework

There is also another interpretation for the Qur'ānic reference cited in the story. Ibn Hishām's citation of 28:12 could be regarded as expression of his evaluation of the parallel status of prophethood between Muḥammad and Moses.²³ It is evident that Ibn Hishām frequently mentions traditions that depict and develop similarities between these two prophets in his *Sīrah*. For instance, he narrates ḥadīth that present the first revelation of Muḥammad in parallel with the revelation to Moses; and the character traits of the Quraysh that ensured that they were always questioning Muḥammad is described as sharing similar attributes with the followers of Moses; and the victory of Muḥammad is ascribed in similar terms to the triumph of Moses over Pharaoh.²⁴

In some instances, Qur'ānic references are also employed in the association of Muḥammad with Moses, as, for example, in the focus of our study, in verse 28:12, and verse 2:108. The analogy is also sometimes embedded in lines of poetry. For example, in the poetry of 'Abdullah ibn Rawāḥah: "God declared your well-being [as] an affirmation of Moses, and a triumph as a victory to whom He granted."²⁵ In the poetry of 'Abbās Ibn Mirdās he states: "and Muḥammad is a servant, a messenger of God who will not go astray nor oppress; we found him (Muḥammad) a Prophet, like Moses"²⁶ Moreover, Ibn Hishām also narrates a ḥadīth concerning how the Prophet himself embodied and represented himself as the Prophet Moses and 'Alī as the Prophet Hārūn (Aaron), Moses' brother. This frequent analogous repetition and association of Muḥammad as a corresponding prophet to Moses implies how the concept is

²² Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, p.1/310.

²³ Another study has presented similar notion. See, Ahmad Sanusi Azmi, "Narratives of the Prophet's Early Life in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Buḥārī*: An Analytical Study of Qur'ānic References in *Sīrah Nabawiyya*", in *Al-Bayan: Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 15, no. 2 (2017), pp. 193-212.

²⁴ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, p.1/238, 1/548, 2/277.

²⁵ He says: *fathabbatallahu mā a'ṭaka min ḥasanin tatbbīta Mūsa wa naṣran kalladbī nuṣirū*. Ibid, p. 2/374.

²⁶ He says: *bi anna Muḥammadan 'abdun rasūlum li rabbi lā yaḍillu walā yajūru, wajadnahu nabīyyan mithla Mūsā*. See Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, p.2/451.

substantiated very clearly in Ibn Hishām's view. It is, therefore, reasonable to propose that the citation of Qur'ānic references to Muḥammad's suckling is a representation of his thought regarding the clear correspondence of status between Muḥammad and Moses.

The association of Muḥammad's suckling period with Moses' did not only occur in the ninth century. Most likely because of its similar theme, some scholars of the later period might have also made a connection between them. For example Ibn 'Ashūr (d. 1394/1973) the scholar of fourteenth/twentieth century, in his commentary of 28:12, adduces the account of Ḥalīmah and her nursing to Muḥammad as a parallel example to the Moses' infancy narrative.²⁷ Without referring to 28:12, other scholars may have analogized these two accounts as conveying a similar concept. For example, al-Manṣurfūrī considers that the exalted status of Ḥalīmah was conferred to her is the consequence of her great deed in nurturing the Prophet, as similar to how God exalted the status of Āsiā in protecting and raising Moses.²⁸ Ṣiddīqī likens the negligence of wet nurses to wet-nurse Muḥammad as resembling the inability of wet nurse to suckle Moses.²⁹ The similarity of themes between the storylines of Moses and Muḥammad might invite the scholar to deem the account of Muḥammad's time as a suckling infant as reminiscent of Moses' narrative. It also therefore possible that a reading of 28:12, might foresee the period of Muḥammad's suckling, or vice versa.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there are two possible reasons which lead Ibn Hishām to adduce 28:12 in his account of Muḥammad's time as a suckling infant. The first is to highlight and underscore the apparent linguistic irregularity in the narration of Ibn Ishāq. The second is to indicate and give credence to the similarity between the accounts of two prophets. And the third possibility is that either he or Ibn Ishāq constructed the story on the basis of the Moses story in the Qur'ān.

²⁷ Ibn 'Ashūr, Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tamwīr*, Tunis, Dār al-Tunisiyya li al-Nashr, 1984, 20/84.

²⁸ Al-Manṣurfūrī, Muḥammad Sulaymān, *Raḥma lil 'Ālamīn* (Riyād: Dār al-Salām li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', n.d), p.1/526.

²⁹ Ṣiddīqī, Muḥammad Yāsin, *al-Hajamāt al-Mugbraḍa 'Alā al-Tāriḳh al-Islāmī*, trans. Sāmīr Ibrāhīm (Dār al-Ṣahwa li al-Nashr, 1988), p.32.

Some important *Sīrah* scholars are recognised as well-versed in biblical and other pre-Islamic heritage, including Wahb ibn Munabbih, on whom, according to Khoury, Ibn Ishāq is highly dependent as a source of biblical narratives, and indeed, Ibn Hishām establishes him (Wahb ibn Munabbih) as major reference in his *Kitāb al-Tijān*;³⁰ and Hishām al-Kalbī, who according to Horovitz, is the source of biblical pre-history for Ibn Sa‘d.³¹ As discussed before, Muslim scholars such as Ibn Hishām and others³² consistently make parallel comparison between Muḥammad and biblical prophets. The profuse ‘foreign’ elements embedded in the Islamic *Sīrah* might not cast a favourable image upon the Prophet of Islam among Muslims. It is reasonable, therefore, to suggest that the process of Qur’ānisation was developed in order to neutralise the ‘foreign’ accounts and provide a more Qur’ānic image to the final prophet. In the *Sīrah* of Ibn Hishām, the process of how God protects Muḥammad from being wet-nursed by any other woman except Halima has noticeably similar concepts, of protection and God’s plan for His prophet, with the narrative of Moses. Apart from providing a lexical explanation of Ibn Ishāq’s *Sīrah*, the insertion of 28:12 as Qur’ānic reference to this event might also be perceived as Ibn Hishām’s effort to Qur’ānise the narrative.

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³⁰ See, R.G. Khoury, “Wahb b. Munabbih”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition. ed. P. Bearman, et. al., Brill Online, 2015; Raven, Wim, “*Sīrah* and the Qur’ān”, in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, Georgetown University, Washington DC. Brill Online, 2015.

³¹ Horovitz, Josef, *The Earliest Biographies of the Prophet and Their Authors*, ed. Lawrence Conrad (New Jersey, 2002), p.120.

³² Including Aḥmad and al-Tirmidhī.

- . "Sīrah Of The Prophet's Early Life In Musnad of Aḥmad: An Analytical Study Of Qur'ānic References In Sīrah Nabawīyah." *Sains Humanika* Vol. 9, No. 3, 2017.
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