

International Social Sciences and Education Conference 2025
"Empowering Knowledge: Driving Change Through Social Science and Educational Research"
Virtual Conference
24-25 May 2025

Organised by: CLM PUBLISHING RESOURCES

**Decoding Al-Israiliyyat in Tafsir Tarjuman Al-Mustafid:
A genetic approach to the first juz of the Al-Quran**

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Abstract

This study employs a genetic methodology to investigate the incorporation of al-Israiliyyat in the First Juz of the Quran as interpreted in Tafsir Tarjuman al-Mustafid. Al-Israiliyyat, narratives of Jewish and Christian origin, are critically analysed to determine their impact on the exegetical process. The research traces these narrations' provenance and reference sources, offering insights into their transmission and integration. By situating the findings within a historical and epistemological framework, this study contributes to the field of Quranic exegesis. It enriches scholarly understanding of al-Israiliyyat's role in Islamic interpretative traditions.

Keywords: al-Israiliyyat; Tafsir Tarjuman al-Mustafid; First Juz of the Quran; Genetic Approach

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1.0 Introduction

During the formative period of Islam's introduction to the Malay world, scholars diligently produced works spanning various Islamic disciplines, including *fiqh*, *aqidah*, *tafsir*, *hadith*, *akhlak*, and *muamalat*. These scholarly contributions have retained enduring relevance and are cited by contemporary researchers in current academic discourse. This intellectual legacy reflects early Muslim scholars' profound influence and lasting success, whose works remain integral in informing and shaping scholarly inquiry today.

The seventeenth century marked a particularly significant period in the consolidation of Islam in the Aceh region, driven by the establishment of the Aceh Sultanate of Dar al-Salam. This sultanate emerged as a major centre of Islamic scholarship in the Malay world and Southeast Asia (Salleh, 2021). Among the notable scholars of this era was Al-Fansuri, A. R., a distinguished religious figure appointed as Qadi to the Queen of Aceh Dar al-Salam. With strong governmental support, he actively authored scholarly works and

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propagated Islamic teachings throughout Aceh and its surrounding regions. His extensive expertise in various Islamic disciplines, including *fiqh*, *tasawuf*, *aqidah*, *tafsir*, and *hadith*, culminated in producing influential writings that continue to hold scholarly significance (Hidayatullah & Elit, 2020).

Among Al-Fansuri's most celebrated contributions is *Tafsir Tarjuman al-Mustafid*, widely esteemed within the Malay-speaking communities of Indonesia, Thailand, and Malaysia. As his first major Quranic exegesis, this work covers all thirty *juzs* of the Qur'an. It is the earliest comprehensive tafsir produced by a Nusantara scholar in Malay. The work has been regarded as a translation and adaptation of Tafsir al-Baydawi for over three centuries, reflecting its profound influence on the region's exegetical tradition. Beyond serving as a valuable reference for the public, it has long functioned as an essential academic source for Quranic exegesis, particularly within Malaysia's traditional *Pondok* educational institutions, mosques, and suraus (Abdullah, 2020).

A closer examination of *Tafsir Tarjuman al-Mustafid* reveals the integration of diverse knowledge sources, including the opinions of the Prophet's companions, discussions on *fiqh*, historical narratives of earlier communities, references to *al-Nasikh* and *al-Mansukh*, virtues of the Qur'an, and the *asbab al-nuzul* (occasions of revelation). However, Al-Fansuri's presentation of these scientific and historical elements lacks systematic classification, which has led to interpretative challenges among readers and scholars. To address this issue, the present study seeks to identify, classify, and analyse the scientific and exegetical content embedded within *Tafsir Tarjuman al-Mustafid*, with a particular focus on *al-Isrā'īliyyāt* in the first *juz* of the Qur'an.

2.0 Literature Review

Previous studies on Tafsir Tarjuman al-Mustafid have focused on its historical background, linguistic features, and influence within the Malay intellectual and religious traditions. One significant area of exploration has been the dissemination and reception of the text, especially its importance in traditional Islamic education systems. Abdullah (2020) examined the role of Tafsir Tarjuman al-Mustafid as a key reference in Pondok institutions and mosques across the Malay Archipelago. His work highlighted how the tafsir has been used for centuries as an educational resource, shaping the understanding of the Qur'an in the region. Given the prominence of Pondok schools as centres of Islamic learning, this role is crucial, where such texts are read and studied by students and scholars alike.

Further investigation into the historical perception of Tafsir Tarjuman al-Mustafid was conducted by Basri (2021), who focused on the relationship between the tafsir and its source, Tafsir al-Baydawi. Basri observed that several editions of Tafsir Tarjuman al-Mustafid were initially titled *al-Tarjamat al-Jāwīyyah li al-Tafsīr al-Musamma Anwār al-Tanzīl Wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl li al-Imām al-Qāḍī al-Bayḍāwī*, reinforcing the belief that the work served as a Malay translation of the famous Tafsir al-Baydawi. This connection with al-Baydawi highlights the tafsir's academic and theological importance in the Malay world, where it became a prominent reference for understanding the Qur'anic text.

In more recent research, scholars have started to delve deeper into the content of Tafsir Tarjuman al-Mustafid. Hidayatullah and Elit (2020) explored the multidisciplinary nature of Al-Fansuri's approach in his tafsir. They pointed out that Al-Fansuri incorporated many sources, including narrations from the Prophet's companions, jurisprudential discussions, historical accounts of previous communities, and references to exegetical tools like *al-Nasikh* and *al-Mansukh*. However, Hidayatullah and Elit also noted that these elements were often presented without clear thematic or categorical organisation, leading to some ambiguity in interpretation. This lack of structure in Al-Fansuri's presentation has prompted further interest in how these diverse elements contribute to the overall understanding of the Qur'anic text.

An earlier study on the fourth *juz* of the Qur'an within Tafsir Tarjuman al-Mustafid focused on occurrences of *al-Nasikh* and *al-Mansukh*, which refer to the abrogation and replacement of certain verses. Building on this research, the present study focuses on the first *juz* of the Qur'an, specifically investigating the presence of *al-Isrā'īliyyāt*, or Jewish traditions, within the tafsir. Applying Goldman's (1967) genetic structuralism approach, the current research aims to refine prior findings and offer new insights into how *al-Isrā'īliyyāt* is used in Al-Fansuri's interpretation. Additionally, the study will consult other authoritative tafsir works, such as Tafsir al-Khazin and Tafsir al-Qurtubi, to enrich its analysis. This effort is expected to significantly contribute to Quranic studies and the history of Malay Islamic intellectual thought, while setting the stage for future research on Tafsir Tarjuman al-Mustafid and its treatment of other parts of the Qur'an.

This research contributes to the broader field of Islamic scholarship by refining the understanding of Tafsir Tarjuman al-Mustafid and its sources. It enhances the scholarly appreciation of Malay intellectual heritage.

3.0 Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to identify and systematically present data concerning the *al-Isrā'īliyyāt* embedded within Tafsir Tarjuman al-Mustafid, with a particular focus on the exegesis of the first *juz* of the Quran.

4.0 Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, analytical approach to examine the *al-Isrā'īliyyāt* content in Tafsir Tarjuman al-Mustafid, aligning with Goldman's (1967) Genetic Approach. The method involves textual analysis to identify, classify, and interpret references to *al-Isrā'īliyyāt*, while also conducting comparative analysis with primary sources like Tafsir al-Khazin and Tafsir al-Qurtubi. The study contextualises the scientific elements within Al-Fansuri's work by integrating historical, linguistic, and exegetical perspectives. Goldman's approach

emphasises the importance of understanding the text's origin, development, and contextual influences, ensuring a comprehensive and rigorous understanding of the embedded knowledge.

5.0 Findings

The analysis of the selected verses from Surah Al-Baqarah reveals a profound sequence of events centred on the narrative of Prophet Moses (Musa) and the Israelites. Code S1 highlights Pharaoh's oppressive measures, driven by a prophetic dream that foretold his downfall at the hands of an Israelite boy. To prevent this perceived threat, Pharaoh ordered the killing of all newborn Israelite males. Code S2 illustrates divine intervention when Prophet Moses, under God's command, struck the sea with his staff, parting the waters and allowing the Israelites to escape. As Pharaoh and his army pursued them, the sea returned to its original state, drowning Pharaoh and his forces and granting deliverance to Moses and his people.

Code S3 addresses the promise made by Allah SWT, assuring Moses that he would receive the Torah upon his safe return to Egypt after the demise of Pharaoh. Code S4 discusses the divine command directed at those who worshipped the golden calf, instructing them to carry out mutual executions as a form of atonement. Despite initial resistance due to their kinship bonds, they were compelled to obey under divine will. Code S5 recounts the episode where Moses brought seventy representatives to Mount Sinai to seek forgiveness. However, their demand to witness God directly led to their destruction by a heavenly thunderbolt.

Lastly, Code S6 presents the narrative of the angels Harut and Marut, who were sent for a moral trial for humanity by teaching magic. This was not to propagate evil but to test humanity's obedience to divine commands. These findings illustrate key moments of divine intervention, human disobedience, repentance, and the fulfilment of God's promises within the context of Moses and the Israelites' story.

6.0 Discussion

The analysis of al-Isrā'īliyyāt within the first juz of the Quran, as interpreted in Tafsir Tarjuman al-Mustafid, utilising a genetic approach, is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Analysis of al-Isrā'īliyyāt in the First Juz of the Quran as Interpreted in Tafsir Tarjuman al-Mustafid

Code	Surah	Interpretation
S1	Al-Baqarah, 02: 49	Pharaoh, troubled by a dream foretelling his downfall, ordered the killing of every male Israelite child. Twelve thousand children died. A plague struck the elders, and Coptic leaders warned Pharaoh of the kingdom's collapse. The Pharaoh alternated between killing and sparing children yearly. Moses was born during the year of the killings.
S2	Al-Baqarah, 02: 50	In the Baidhawi story, Allah SWT commanded Moses to lead the Israelites by night. As they reached the sea, Moses struck it with his staff, parting the waters into twelve dry paths. The Israelites crossed safely while Pharaoh and his people followed. The waters closed, drowning them when they entered.
S3	Al-Baqarah, 02: 51	The story in Baidhawi begins with the promise that when the Israelites returned to Egypt after Pharaoh's death, Allah Ta'ala promised Moses that He would grant him the Torah on Mount Sinai. Allah also set a time for approximately one month of Dzul-Qa'dah and the ten days of the Hajj month.
S4	Al-Baqarah, 02: 54	The Jewish scholars narrate that some were commanded to kill others who worshipped the calf. Unable to execute the command, a man saw his people and relatives and hesitated. Allah sent a black cloud to obscure their vision, and the killings continued until seventy thousand were killed. Moses and Aaron then prayed, and the cloud was lifted.
S5	Al-Baqarah, 02: 55	The story in Khazin recounts Allah SWT commanding Moses to lead seventy men to Mount Sinai to seek forgiveness for those who worshipped the calf. After fasting and purifying themselves, they arrived and requested to hear Allah's words. Moses explained it was not possible. A cloud descended upon the mountain, and Moses entered it to converse with Allah. A barrier was placed between Moses and the people, and they heard Allah declare His sovereignty. Despite this, they demanded to see Allah. As a result, a thunderbolt struck them, killing them.
S6	Al-Baqarah, 02: 102	Discussing the story's origins, the devils during Solomon's reign, and the beings Harut and Marut, explore whether they were human. According to the Tafsir Tsa'labiy, the devils recorded magic knowledge from Asaf bin Barkhiya, Solomon's minister, and buried it under his prayer place after Solomon's reign ended. When Solomon passed away, the devils revealed this knowledge to the people, who mistakenly attributed Solomon's power to magic. Over time, they abandoned their sacred texts. Later, Prophet Muhammad SAW clarified Solomon's purity through the verse, "And they followed what the devils recited during the reign of Solomon" (Qur'an, 2:102). Harut and Marut, as mentioned in the Tafsir Jalalain, are believed to have been angels sent by Allah Ta'ala to teach magic as a test for humanity.

(Source: al-Fansuri, 2014)

Based on the table above, the research findings are presented as follows. Code S1 refers to the background of the revelation of Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 49, which relates to an incident in which Pharaoh experienced a dream interpreted as a forewarning of his and his kingdom's downfall at the hands of a male child from among the Children of Israel. To prevent this perceived threat, he ordered his forces to kill every newborn Israelite male. Code S2 pertains to Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 50, which recounts Allah SWT's command to Prophet Moses to strike the sea with his staff. This act miraculously parted the waters, creating a path for the Israelites to cross safely. Once they had passed, and as Pharaoh and his army pursued them into the midst of the sea, Allah SWT restored the sea to its original state, thereby drowning Pharaoh and his forces while granting deliverance to Moses and his followers.

Code S3 pertains to the verse in which Allah SWT conveyed the promise that the Torah would be bestowed upon Moses following his return to Egypt, after his deliverance from Pharaoh's oppression and the latter's demise in the Red Sea. Code S4 explicates the divine command directed at those who had engaged in the worship of the golden calf: that they should carry out mutual executions as a form of atonement. However, due to the bonds of brotherhood among them, they were reluctant to comply. Consequently, Allah SWT enveloped them in a dense cloud, compelling their obedience to the divine decree throughout the day. Code S5 reflects the occasion wherein Allah SWT instructed Moses to bring seventy individuals from among the calf-worshippers to Mount Sinai to seek His forgiveness. Allah SWT cast a cloud upon them upon their arrival and addressed Moses directly.

Nevertheless, when the cloud was lifted and Moses relayed the divine commandments, they rejected his message and audaciously demanded to see God with their own eyes. As a result of this defiance, they were struck dead by a thunderbolt. Lastly, Code S6 relates to the context of the revelation of verse 102 of Surah Al-Baqarah. In this verse, Allah SWT disclosed the narrative of two angels, Harut and Marut, who were sent not to propagate evil but rather to teach magic as a means of trial and moral discernment for humankind during that period.

As outlined in the table, the analysis of the selected verses from Surah Al-Baqarah reveals a sequence of events centred on the narrative of Prophet Moses (Musa) and the Israelites. Code S1 highlights the oppressive measures enacted by Pharaoh, prompted by a prophetic dream interpreted as foretelling his demise at the hands of an Israelite boy, leading to the systematic killing of newborn males. Code S2 illustrates divine intervention through Moses, who, under God's command, struck the sea with his staff, allowing his people to escape while their pursuers perished in the returning waters. Code S3 addresses the promise of divine legislation, wherein Moses was assured the revelation of the Torah upon his safe return following Pharaoh's destruction. Code S4 sheds light on the communal expiation required of those who had committed idolatry by worshipping the golden calf, a command initially resisted due to kinship ties but ultimately fulfilled under divine compulsion. Code S5 recounts a moment of collective repentance, as Moses brought seventy representatives to Mount Sinai to seek forgiveness; their subsequent disbelief in Moses' testimony and demand to witness the Divine resulted in their death by a heavenly strike. Finally, Code S6 presents a theological trial involving the angels Harut and Marut, who were sent with knowledge of sorcery not for its propagation but as a moral test for humanity.

7.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study employed the genetic approach proposed by Goldmann (1967) to explore the presence and influence of al-Isrā'īlyyāt in the first juz' of the Qur'an, as interpreted in the Tafsīr Tarjumān al-Mustafid by Al-Fansuri, A. R. By utilising this approach, the research successfully uncovered valuable insights into the historical and contextual dimensions of the Qur'anic verses. The method allowed for a deeper examination of the interpretative layers embedded within the commentary, revealing six instances where al-Isrā'īlyyāt, or Jewish traditions, were incorporated into the Qur'anic exegesis.

The identified instances include significant narratives such as: (i) Surah Al-Baqarah (2:49), which recounts the story of Pharaoh's decree to massacre newborn Israelite males following a prophetic dream predicting his downfall, with Moses and Aaron being born in separate years of slaughter; (ii) Surah Al-Baqarah (2:50), which describes the divine intervention at the Red Sea, enabling Moses and his followers to escape while Pharaoh's army was drowned; (iii) Surah Al-Baqarah (2:51), which mentions the promise of the Torah to Moses upon his return to Egypt after Pharaoh's defeat; (iv) Surah Al-Baqarah (2:54), detailing Allah's command for the worshippers of the golden calf to execute one another, with the event being overshadowed by a dark cloud; (v) Surah Al-Baqarah (2:55), narrating how seventy men accompanied Moses to Mount Sinai seeking forgiveness but were struck down for demanding to see Allah; and (vi) Surah Al-Baqarah (2:102), which recounts the story of Harut and Marut, two angels sent to teach magic as a trial for humanity.

The findings of this study affirm the importance of understanding the historical context of Qur'anic revelations for accurate exegesis. When interpreting the Qur'an, neglecting the background of al-Isrā'īlyyāt can lead to misinterpretations, as these narratives are drawn from Jewish traditions. While these stories can hold interpretative value and provide depth to certain Qur'anic accounts, it is essential to approach them with a critical eye to assess their authenticity. Not all al-Isrā'īlyyāt are directly applicable to Qur'anic interpretation, and their incorporation should be approached cautiously.

Considering these findings, the study recommends that contemporary scholars adopt a rigorous and discerning approach when engaging with al-Isrā'īlyyāt in their tafsir (exegesis). Ensuring that only authentic and reliable accounts from Jewish traditions inform Qur'anic interpretations is crucial. Such an approach will uphold the methodological integrity of tafsir, maintaining the authenticity and credibility of Qur'anic exegesis. This careful examination will also safeguard the preservation of the Qur'anic message, preventing distortions or misunderstandings in interpretations that could affect its true meaning.

Furthermore, the study encourages further research on the role and influence of al-Isrā'īlyyāt in other classical Malay tafsir texts. Expanding the research to include a broader range of tafsir works will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the influence of Jewish traditions in the regional exegetical tradition. This extended research will contribute to the continued development of the Malay intellectual heritage, enriching the region's scholarly discourse on Qur'anic interpretation.

In conclusion, this study highlights the significance of carefully examining the incorporation of al-Isrā'īlyyāt in Qur'anic exegesis, particularly in classical Malay tafsir. By maintaining a balanced and critical approach, scholars can ensure that the Qur'anic text is interpreted with historical awareness and scholarly integrity, safeguarding the authenticity of its message for future generations.

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