

ANALYSIS OF THE PHRASE BISMILLAH (A THEMATIC-COMPARATIVE METHOD BETWEEN AL- TABARI'S INTERPRETATION AND THE HADITH PERSPECTIVE)

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Abstract

The phrase Bismillah without being followed by al-Rahman and al-Rahim appears in the Qur'an, specifically in Surah Hud, verse 41, which states bismillah majreha wa mursaaaha. This indicates both explicit and implicit significance of the phrase Bismillah for deeper study. Moreover, the phrase Bismillah is repeated at the beginning of each surah except for Surah al-Taubah. Similarly, the phrase Bismillah is mentioned in authentic Hadith, highlighting its importance. Thus, Bismillah is important to study and understand not just as a mere recitation, but also to comprehend its meaning and benefits. This research specifically discusses Bismillah without the phrases al-Rahman and al-Rahim according to the interpretation of al-Tabari and the perspective of Hadith. The research methodology used is descriptive qualitative research with a thematic-comparative interpretation method. The results of this study show that al-Tabari interprets Bismillah with the meaning of tasmiyya (naming) Allah SWT, thereby negating any deity other than Allah SWT, and sometimes Bismillah precedes ta'awwudh in several Hadiths.

Keywords: Thematic-Comparative, Bismillah, al-Tabari, Hadith

Abstrak

Lafaz Bismillah tanpa dilanjutkan dengan kata al-Rahman dan al-Rahim terdapat dalam al-Qur'an yaitu pada QS Hud ayat 41 yaitu bismillahi majreha wa mursaha mengindikasikan kelebihan lafaz Bismillah secara eksplisit dan implisit untuk dikaji lebih mendalam. Terlebih lagi lafaz Bismillah selalu berulang disetiap awal surah kecuali pada awal surah al-Taubah. Demikian halnya lafaz Bismillah terdapat dalam hadis Sahih yang menunjukkan pentingnya lafaz tersebut. Oleh karena Bismillah penting untuk diteliti dan dipahami, bukan hanya sekedar bacaan semata, tetapi penting untuk diketahui arti dan manfaatnya. Penelitian ini khusus membahas tentang Bismillah tanpa lafaz al-Rahman dan al-Rahim menurut

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penafsiran al-Tabari dan perspektif hadis. Metodologi penelitian yang digunakan adalah penelitian kualitatif deskriptif dengan metode tafsir tematik-komparatif. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa al-Tabari menafsirkan Bismillah dengan makna tasmiyya (penamaan) Allah Swt. sehingga meniadakan Tuhan selain Allah Swt. dan terkadang Bismillah mendahului ta'awwuz di beberapa hadis.

Kata kunci: Tematik-Komparatif, Bismillāh, al-Ṭabari,

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Available online at <https://journalmahadaly.asadiyahpusat.org/index.php/tafasir>

A. Introduction

Al-Tabari is a renowned interpreter known for his skill in interpreting the Qur'an. In several of his interpretations, he employs a theological approach to interpretation that is difficult for other scholars to dispute. His knowledge, based on classical religious sciences (salaf), serves as the cornerstone of his arguments in various interpretative dialogues.¹

According to Salehuddin Mattawang, *basmalah* in the Hadith, as interpreted by al-Tabari, has two general meanings: first, as an etiquette when praying and prostrating to Allah SWT, and second, as a remembrance that protects one from all dangers.²

Regarding human protection from dangers, Nisa Fitri Andhini in her research concludes that *ta'awwudh* and *basmalah* inspire the spiritual enthusiasm of Muslims to seek protection from Allah SWT and also to receive His blessings.³

Similarly, *basmalah* is mentioned in several authentic Hadiths of the Prophet (peace be upon him), indicating its importance to be recited. However, in the Hadiths, *basmalah* is often abbreviated to *Bismillah*. *Bismillah* without the words *al-Rahman* and *al-Rahim* is also found in the Qur'an, specifically in Surah Hud.

¹Shah, "Al-Ṭabari and the Dynamics of Tafsīr: Theological Dimensions of a Legacy.", h. 113-115

²Mattawang, "Penafsiran Sahabat dalam Tafsir Ath-Tabari (Analisis Ayat Basmalah)", h. 398.

³Andhini, "Nilai-Nilai Optimisme Dalam Isti'Adzah Dan Basmallah.", h. 17.

This research aims to analyze *Bismillah* by comparing al-Tabari's interpretation and the Hadiths of the Prophet (peace be upon him) to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of *Bismillah* that has not been comprehensively understood so far.

B. Research Methodology

This study is a *qualitative-descriptive* research using a *thematic-comparative* interpretation method to obtain comprehensive and accurate results. The objects of this research are al-Tabari's exegesis, namely *Jami' al-Bayan fi Ta'wil al-Qur'an*, and Hadith books.

C. Research Findings

1. Al-Tabari's Interpretation of *Bismillah*

The pronunciation of the letter ba in *Bismillah* without using a verb (fi'l) indicates that the reader understands the implied action (verb). This is similar to how one might answer the question What are you eating? by simply saying "food" without explicitly stating I am eating food. When *Bismillah* is recited, the implied verb might be I am reading with Bismillah, or if one is sitting and wants to stand, they might say I stand with Bismillah.⁴

Additionally, in the Hadith narrated by Ibn 'Abbas, it is mentioned that before the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was instructed to recite *basmalah*, he was first commanded to recite *ta'awudh*, which is *asta'izu bissaami' al-'aliimi min ash-shaytaan ir-rajeem*.⁵

In al-Tabari's interpretation, he often presents discussions about the interpretation of verses and answers them himself. For instance, if there is confusion regarding whether mentioning *Bismillah* might imply invoking a name other than Allah, he clarifies that *Bismillah* means i begin with the naming of Allah, emphasizing the invocation of Allah SWT alone.⁶

Al-Tabari is known as a scholar who is very meticulous in quoting interpretations. This careful approach is evident in an opinion he cites, which

⁴Muhamamd bin Jarir bin Yazid bin Kasir bin Galib al-Amili, "Jami' Al-Bayan Fi Ta'Wil Al-Qur'an.", h. 114-115.

⁵Muhamamd bin Jarir bin Yazid bin Kasir bin Galib al-Amili. H. 115.

⁶Muhamamd bin Jarir bin Yazid bin Kasir bin Galib al-Amili. H. 115.

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As for the term *Jalalah*, which is Allah, linguistically it means that everything worships Him.⁸ The term Allah means the one who is worshiped, and *al-ilahah* is its verbal noun (*masdar*).⁹ The word Allah originates from *al-Ilah*, analogous to the phrase *lakinna huwallahu rabbi* (but He is Allah, my Lord). Originally, *lakinna* comes from *lakin ana*, where the hamzah is omitted, causing the two nuns to merge (*idgham*). Similarly, in *al-Ilah*, the hamzah is omitted because it is considered an additional letter (*za'idah*), leading the two laams to merge and ultimately form the pronunciation "Allah."¹⁰

As for al-Tabari's interpretation of Surah Hud, verse 41, which states *bismillahi majreha wa mursaha*, he explains it as: invoking the name of Allah SWT when the boat sets sail and when it docks.¹¹ The phrase *Bismillah* is not directly interpreted, and instead, the focus is on the words following it.

In another instance, al-Tabari interprets the word *isma* to mean "remembrance" (*zikr*) at the beginning of Surah al-A'la: *sabbih isma Rabbika al-A'la*. According to al-Tabari, quoting some interpretations, *isma* means *salli bi zikri Rabbika ya Muhammad*, which translates to pray with the remembrance of your Lord, O Muhammad.¹²

The researcher found that the word *Bismillah* means both *tasmiyyatillah* (the naming of Allah) and *zikrillah* (the remembrance of

⁷Muhamamd bin Jarir bin Yazid bin Kasir bin Galib al-Amili. H. 115.

⁸ Muhamamd bin Jarir bin Yazid bin Kasir bin Galib al-Amili. H. 116.

⁹ Muhamamd bin Jarir bin Yazid bin Kasir bin Galib al-Amili. H. 124.

¹⁰Muhamamd bin Jarir bin Yazid bin Kasir bin Galib al-Amili. H. 125.

¹¹Muhamamd bin Jarir bin Yazid bin Kasir bin Galib al-Amili. Jilid VX, h. 329.

¹²Muhamamd bin Jarir bin Yazid bin Kasir bin Galib al-Amili. Jilid XXIV, h. 367.

Allah), both generally meaning to mention the name of Allah SWT. According to Al-Zamakhshari, *tasmiyyah* refers to naming the essence of Allah SWT, not His name itself.¹³ On the other hand, *zikr* according to Al-Raghib Al-Asfahani sometimes refers to the state of a person's soul, through which one can maintain knowledge, such as memorization, or it can mean the act of bringing something to mind. Remembering Allah SWT includes both the heart and the tongue.¹⁴

Explicitly, Al-Tabari, in his interpretation of the meaning of *Bismillah*, said: "أبدأ بتسمية الله وذكره قبل كل شيء" which means "I begin by naming and remembering Allah SWT before everything."¹⁵

Specifically, *tasmiyyah* according to Al-Tabari refers to naming or terminology, such as his interpretation of the verse *wa la> tana> bazu> bi al-alqa>b* (and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames) which refers to naming a person because of their disbelief after embracing Islam.¹⁶ *Zikrillah* in Al-Tabari's interpretation refers to remembering Allah SWT in prayer, as his interpretation of the verse *walazikrullahi akbar* is that nothing surpasses the remembrance of Allah, which is prayer, as in the verse *aqimi al-salata li zikri* (establish prayer for My remembrance). This interpretation is based on a hadith from Qatadah. Umm Al-Darda' mentioned that "zikrillah" includes various acts like prayer, fasting, doing good, and avoiding evil, with the most noble being glorifying Allah SWT.¹⁷ According to Al-Dahhak, "zikrillah" in the verse *ya ayyuhalla`zina amanu la tulhikum amwalukum wa la awladukum `an zikrillah*. (O you who have believed, let not your wealth and your children divert you from remembrance of Allah) refers to the five daily prayers.¹⁸

¹³Abu al-Qasim Muhmud 'Umar al-Zamakhshari al-Khawarizmi, "Al-Kasysyaf 'an Haqa'iq Al-Tanzil Wa 'Uyun Al-Ta'Wil Fi Wujuh Al-Ta'wil", h. 655.

¹⁴Al-Husain bin Muhammad bin al-Mufaddal al-Raghib al-Asfahani, "Mufradat Al-Faz Al-Qur'an", h. 363 dan 364.

¹⁵Muhamamd bin Jarir bin Yazid bin Kasir bin Galib al-Amili, "Jami' Al-Bayan Fi Ta'Wil Al-Qur'an", jilid I, h. 115.

¹⁶Muhamamd bin Jarir bin Yazid bin Kasir bin Galib al-Amili. Jilid XXII, h. 301.

¹⁷Muhamamd bin Jarir bin Yazid bin Kasir bin Galib al-Amili. Jilid XX, h. 40.

¹⁸Muhamamd bin Jarir bin Yazid bin Kasir bin Galib al-Amili. Jilid XXIII, h. 410.

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The researcher concludes, based on Al-Tabari's interpretation, that *Bismillah* means *tasmiyyatillah* (mentioning the name of Allah SWT at the beginning of an action) and *zikrillah* (mentioning the name of Allah SWT in every situation and action, particularly in the five daily prayers). Thus, *tasmiyyatillah* is part of *zikrillah*, as all good deeds are part of *zikrillah*, according to Al-Tabari's interpretation from Qatadah. Therefore, *Bismillah* as a Sunnah of the Prophet is one of the good deeds that fall under the category of *zikrillah*.

2. *Bismillah* in the Perspective of Hadith

Bismillah was known to previous communities, as Masyitah said *Bismillah* when combing the hair of Pharaoh's daughter.¹⁹ It is considered the best name, as the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) taught in the Tashahhud of prayer that *Bismillah khair al-asma'* (Bismillah is the best of names).²⁰ In the hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) sometimes mentioned *Bismillah* as a command like *sammillah*, meaning say Bismillah.²¹ The Prophet (PBUH) said:

حدثنا علي بن عبد الله أخبرنا سفيان قال الوليد بن كثير أخبرني أنه سمع وهب بن كيسان أنه سمع عمر بن أبي سلمة يقول: كنت غلاما في حجر رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم وكانت يدي تطيش في الصحيفة فقال لي رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: يا غلام سم الله وكل بيمينك وكل مما يليك. فما زالت تلك طعمتي بعد.

Translation:

'Ali bin 'Abdillah narrated to us, Sufyan narrated to us, Al-Walid bin Kasir said that he heard Wahb bin Kaisan, who heard 'Umar bin Abi Salamah say: When I was a boy under the care of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), my hand would go around the plate. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said to me: O boy, say the name of Allah SWT, eat with your right hand, and eat from what is in front of you. This has been my way of eating ever since.

¹⁹Muhammad bin Hibban bin Ahmad Abu Hatim al-Tamimi al-Basti, "Sahih Bin Hibban", jilid VII, h. 164.

²⁰Abu Bakr Ahmad bin al-Husain bin 'Ali al-Baihaqi, "Al-Sunan Al-Kubra Wa Fi Zailihi Al-Jauhar Al-Naqi", jilid II, h. 142.

²¹Muhammad bin Isma'il Abu 'Abdullah al-Bukhari al-Ja'fi, "Al-Jami' Al-Sahih Al-Mukhtasa.", jilid II, h. 2056

Also, *Bismillah* is explicitly mentioned in other hadiths, such as:²²

حدثنا علي بن عبد الله حدثنا سفیان قال حدثني عبد ربه بن سعيد عن عمرة عن عائشة رضي الله عنها: أن النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم كان يقول للمريض: بسم الله تربة أرضنا بريقة بعضنا يشفى سقيمنا بإذن ربنا.

Translation:

‘Ali bin ‘Abdillah narrated to us, Sufyan narrated to us, he said: ‘Abdu Rabbihi bin Sa‘id narrated to me, from ‘Amrah from ‘A’ishah (RA) said: The Prophet (PBUH) used to say to a sick person: "In the name of Allah SWT, the dust of our land, with the saliva of some of us, our sick will be healed by the permission of our Lord."

In the hadith, *Bismillah* sometimes precedes *ta‘awwudh* (seeking refuge), as in a hadith narrated by Jundub that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) encountered a group who complained about forgetting to pray until the sun had risen. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said that it was not due to forgetfulness but because of the actions of Satan. Before sleeping, he advised them to say *bismillah a‘uzu billahi mina al-syaitan al-rajim*.²³ In another remarkable case, *Bismillah* is said to protect people from jinn and their vision of human private parts.²⁴

There was an instance where a tumor was cured by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) saying *Bismillah*, and the tumor disappeared.²⁵ Similarly, for a wound, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) taught to use saliva on the index finger and apply it to the wound while saying *bismillahi turbatu irdina bi riqi ba‘dina li yusyfa saqimuna bi izni Rabbina*.²⁶ For protection from jinn, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) taught to say *Bismillah arqika*.²⁷ Before sleeping, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) would say *bismillahi*

²²Muhammad bin Isma‘il Abu ‘Abdullah al-Bukhari al-Ja‘fi. Jilid V, h. 2168.

²³Sulaiman bin Ahmad bin Ayyub Abu al-Qasim al-Tabrani, "Al-Mu‘jam Al-Kabir", jilid II, h. 176.

²⁴Abu Bakr Ahmad bin ‘Amr al-Basri, "Musnad Al-Bazzar", jilid II, h. 144.

²⁵Ahmad bin Abi Bakr bin Isma‘il, "Ithaf Al-Khiyarah Al-Mahirah", jilid VII, h. 270.

²⁶Muhammad bin Yazid Abu ‘Abdullah al-Qazwini, "Sunan Ibn Majah", jilid II, h. 1163.

²⁷Abu al-Fadl Ahmad bin ‘Ali bin Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Hajar al-‘Asqalani, "Itraf Al-Musnid Al-Mu‘li Bi Atraf Al-Musnad Al-Hanbali", jilid II, h. 645.

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Imam Al-Shafi'i stated that when slaughtering a sacrificial animal, saying *Bismillah* or adding something to the remembrance of Allah is an act of faith and worship to Allah SWT, and it is permissible to mention Allah's name abundantly and send blessings upon the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to gain reward.³⁵

Sometimes, *Bismillah* is repeated three times in a hadith, as *bismillah salas | an*. This is intended to treat wounds on the body, followed by the prayer *a'uzu billahi wa qudratihi min syarri ma ajid wa uhazir* which is recited

²⁸Ahmad bin 'Amr bin al-Dahhak Abu Bakr al-Syaibani, "Al-Ahadu Wa Al-Masani", juz V, h. 70.

²⁹Muhammad bin Isma'il Abu 'Abdullah al-Bukhari al-Ja'fi, "Al-Adab Al-Mufrad", h. 230.

³⁰Muhammad bin Isma'il Abu 'Abdullah al-Bukhari al-Ja'fi. H. 409.

³¹Muhammad bin Futuh al-Hamidi, "Al-Jam' Baina Al-Sahihaini Al-Bukhari Wa Muslim", jilid II, h. 30.

³²Muhammad Diya' al-Rahman al-A'zami, "Al-Minnah Al-Kubra Syarh Wa Takhrij Al-Sunan Al-Sugra", jilid III, h. 80.

³³Sulaiman bin Ahmad bin Ayyub Abu al-Qasim al-Tabrani, "Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir", jilid I, h. 192.

³⁴Abu Ja'far Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Salamah bin 'Abdulmalik bin Salamah al-Azdi al-Hajri al-Masri al-Tahawi, "Musykil Al-Asar", jilid I, h. 343.

³⁵Muhammad Diya' al-Rahman al-A'zami, "Al-Minnah Al-Kubra Syarh Wa Takhrij Al-Sunan Al-Sugra", jilid IX, h. 285.

seven times.³⁶ If *Bismillah* is forgotten when eating, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) instructed to say *bismillahi fi awalihhi wa akhirihhi*.³⁷

From the various explanations in the hadith, it can be understood that *Bismillah* has many benefits for both the physical and spiritual well-being of humans, serving as a remedy for both physical and spiritual ailments, even if this is not always recognized. The following is a comparison of Al-Tabari's interpretation and the perspective of hadith on *Bismillah*.

3. Comparative Analysis of Al-Tabari's Interpretation and Hadith Perspective

The research on Al-Tabari's interpretation of *Bismillah* reveals that he interprets *Bismillah* with two meanings: *tasmiyyatillah* and *zikrillah*. Both interpretations capture the essence of *Bismillah*. The difference lies in the timing of its application: a. *Bismillah* in the sense of "tasmiyyatillah" is said at the beginning of an action; *Bismillah* in the sense of *zikrillah* is said at the beginning, middle, and end of an action. For example, the definition of prayer starts with takbiratul ihram and ends with salam, taking into account the pillars of prayer and what invalidates it. Prayer is a form of *zikrillah*. Similarly, *Bismillah* is part of *zikrillah*, as *Bismillah* is part of the first verse of Surah Al-Fatihah and is part of the Quranic verse recited in prayer.

The study of *Bismillah* from the hadith perspective found that *Bismillah* without the phrases *al-Rahman* and *al-Rahim* has its own meaning and benefits. Previous hadith discussions show that *Bismillah* is the best name of Allah SWT. This explains that the best name in this world is only the name of Allah SWT and His other names, known as Asmaul Husna, because the name of God must surpass all names on earth. Several benefits of *Bismillah* from the hadith perspective, viewed from various situations, include: a. *Bismillah* is said before eating and drinking; b. *Bismillah* is said when someone is injured; c. *Bismillah* is said so that jinn cannot see human

³⁶Muhammad bin Hibban bin Ahmad Abu Hatim al-Tamimi al-Basti, "Sahih Bin Hibban", jilid VII, h. 230.

³⁷Abu 'Abdullah al-Syaibani, "Musnad Al-Imam Ahmad Bin Hanbal", jilid VI, h. 246.

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private parts; d. *Bismillah* is said to protect humans from jinn disturbances, such as difficulty waking up for prayer; e. *Bismillah* can be used to heal humans from diseases like tumors, as the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) healed a tumor by saying Bismillah; f. *Bismillah* is recited to expel Satan from the body, or for ruqyah; g. *Bismillah* is said to avoid danger or disaster; h. *Bismillah* is recited before marital relations to avoid Satan's interference; i. *Bismillah* is recited to dispel doubts or waswas (whispers) in performing an action; j. *Bismillah* is recited to fight against Satan who openly disturbs humans, causing them to shrink like a fly.

The researcher's analysis concludes that *Bismillah* has a very important position because it is part of the pillars of Islam, faith in Allah SWT, and His scriptures. *Bismillah* is highly related to faith and the Quran and hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). *Bismillah* is very necessary for lay Muslims who may not be able to read or memorize long hadith texts; simply saying *Bismillah* can protect them from Satan's disturbances or serve as a remembrance or remedy for various ailments like memory loss, minor and major injuries, tumors, fever, and other medical conditions.

The novelty in this research is that Al-Tabari, in his interpretation, convinces readers that there is no name for God other than Allah SWT alone. The Asmaul Husna are Allah's names, which in essence are Allah Himself. The Asmaul Husna are names of Allah SWT that correspond to His essence and attributes, such as *al-Ahad* (The One) and *al-Sami'* (The All-Hearing).

In the phrase *Bismillah*, it is proven through its interpretation that *Bismillah* means *tasmiiyyatillah*, which is naming Allah SWT in every situation, not just at the beginning of an action, but in every action. This is because Allah SWT is not only present and observant at the beginning but throughout all human actions. Additionally, *ta'awwudh* (seeking refuge) can precede *Bismillah*, as mentioned in the hadith. This shows that *Bismillah* is the beginning of all recitations or remembrances that should always be uttered and reflected upon.

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