



**PROPHET YA‘QŪB’S PARENTING STYLE: A
THEMATIC STUDY**

BY

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**A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for
the degree of Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and
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ABSTRACT

In these modern times, Muslim communities are faced with the issue of implementing effective parenting skills. The increasing number of social problems is associated with parents' failure in applying parental responsibility to their children. In addressing this issue, Islam has provided applicable resolutions through the narratives of the Prophets in the Qur'ān. In the theme of parenting, Almighty Allāh has presented the figure of Prophet Ya'qūb as an exemplary father as he applied effective parenting style in dealing with sibling conflicts among his children. Hence, this study focuses on Prophet Ya'qūb's parenting style through his narrative with his children in the Qur'ān, especially in *Sūrat Yūsuf*. A qualitative study by content analysis was done in this study. 21 Qur'ānic verses were analyzed to identify the ideal principles of Prophet Ya'qūb in his parenting style, with special reference to four *tafāsir* which are *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* and *Tafsīr Al-Miṣbāh*. As a result, this study identifies 10 ideal principles in Prophet Ya'qūb's parenting style: love, concern, wisdom, patience, optimism, continuous guidance, hopefulness, integration of human effort and divine will, great paternal instinct, and forgiveness. Finally, this study discusses the relevance of Prophet Ya'qūb's parenting style in contemporary Muslim society.

خلاصة البحث

تواجه مجتمعات المسلم في هذا العصر الحديث قضية تطبيق مهارات الأبوة الفعّالة. يُعد ارتفاع عدد المشاكل الاجتماعية مرتبطة بفشل الآباء في تنفيذ مسؤولية الأبوة لأولادهم. لمعالجة هذه القضية، فقد قدّم الإسلام القرارات المطابقة من خلال قصص الأنبياء في القرآن. في قضية الأبوة. حينما مثل الله تعالى شخصية يعقوب -عليه السلام- في صورة أبٍ مثالي الذي طبق أسلوب الأبوة الفعّالة فيما يتعلق بتصرف تنافس الأشقاء بين أولاده. تركّزت هذه الدراسة قضية أسلوب أبوة يعقوب -عليه السلام- من خلال قصته مع أولاده في القرآن، خاصة في سورة يوسف. استخدمت هذه الدراسة المنهج النوعي، بحيث قامت بتحليل 21 آية لتحديد المبادئ الأساسية لأسلوب أبوة نبي يعقوب -عليه السلام-، وذلك بالرجوع إلى بعض كتب التفاسير، مثل: تفسير ابن كثير، وتفسير الطبري، وتفسير الأزهري، وتفسير المصباح. نتائج هذه الدراسة تحدد عشرة مبادئ أساسية لأسلوب أبوة نبي يعقوب -عليه السلام-، وهي: المحبة، والرعاية، والحكمة، والصبر، والتفاؤل، والتوجيه المستمر، والأمل، وجهد الاختيار البشري، والإرادة الإلهية، والفراسة الأبوية، والعفو. ختاماً، تبحث هذه الدراسة عن تناسب أسلوب أبوة يعقوب -عليه السلام- بمجتمعات المسلم المعاصر.

APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion, it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage (Uşûl al-Dīn and Comparative Religion).

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Supervisor

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Heritage (Uşûl al-Dīn and Comparative Religion).

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Parenting is a combination of performing responsibility and having good personalities as parents. The style of parenting implemented by parents greatly influences the development of children in the future. Parents' behaviour and actions are presented in their role as models for their children. The reason is that all the lessons and experiences perceived by the children through interactions with the parents start from conception and all the way until they grow up. Those lessons and experiences are treasured in the soul before they interact with other individuals.

Hence, it is important to apply an effective parenting style to the children. This is so because it is capable of developing good children in the aspects of physical, moral and spiritual. Moreover, a good parenting style will result in the developing and nurturing of human being who bring betterment to the religion, the society and the nation. Educationists agree that one of the most effective methods of ethical training is through the actions of the parents. Therefore, it is pertinent for the parents to demonstrate positive and proper actions to their children in their daily life.

With regard to the theme of parenting, Islam has provided the best method of parenting which is relevant and compatible for all times through the narrations of the Prophets such as Prophets Ibrāhīm, Ya'qūb, Nūḥ, Mūsā and others. With regard to Prophet Muḥammad, parenting is more directed and focused on his wives – *ummahāt al-mu'minīn*. It is also noted that the narratives of the Qur'ān on Prophet Ya'qūb are numerous. Hence, it will be worthwhile to focus on Prophet Ya'qūb's method of

parenting as he is recognized as one of the greatest fathers among the Prophets due to his perseverance.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The increasing number of moral decadence and various social problems are the indicator to the collapse of the family institution. Parents' failure to execute their trusts, duties and responsibilities is the main factor for the collapse of the family institution. The collapse of this institution not only leads to the collapse of moral values but also to the increase of social problems.

In regard to this dilemma, there is a crucial need to refer to the Qur'ān and the *ḥadīth*, particularly on the issue of parenting. The Qur'ān, in *Sūrat Yūsuf* has presented Prophet Ya'qūb as a role model of a father and his parenting method in dealing with his twelve sons. One may observe from those verses how Prophet Ya'qūb demonstrated his parenting skills in dealing with his children, the dream of Prophet Yūsuf, the news of the pseudo-death of Prophet Yūsuf, the telepathic relationship between Prophet Ya'qūb and his son, the perseverance of Prophet Ya'qūb with his other sons despite their double-dealer¹ acts and others. The main principles of his parenting style are to be deliberated in this study by referring to the ensuing questions shown in the following section.

¹ Double-dealer is a person who says one thing and does another. As the story narrates, Prophet Yūsuf's brothers were acting as if they were saddened by the loss of Prophet Yūsuf. In fact, they were the ones who planned the evil conspiracy to eliminate Prophet Yūsuf from their father's sight.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The major questions of this study are:

1. What are the main characteristics of Prophet Ya‘qūb which the Qur’ān highlighted?
2. What are the main principles which Prophet Ya‘qūb applied in dealing with his twelve sons?
3. How relevant is the method applied by Prophet Ya‘qūb to the contemporary Muslim society?

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

The objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the characteristics of Prophet Ya‘qūb as mentioned in the Qur’ān.
2. To clarify the ideal principles of parenting which Prophet Ya‘qūb applied in dealing with his twelve sons.
3. To apply the findings on Prophet Ya‘qūb’s parenting style to modern world parenting.

1.5 RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

Research on Prophet Ya‘qūb is significant for family development for he has been depicted as a historic personality and honoured by the Qur’ān to have a character of *ṣabr jamīl* or gracious patience (Qur’ān 70: 5). The Qur’ān presents him as a role model father for this outstanding character, thus makes him more prominent than the other Prophets in the aspect of parenting. His perseverance is highlighted in the Qur’ān to be the finest example on how parents should react towards defiant behaviour of their children. Therefore his parenting style needs to be studied because

of his charisma and how people of today can develop this charisma. In addition, people need to understand how to apply it in daily life, in particular to confront the challenges of jealousy, greediness and self-indulgence. Prophet Ya'qūb bore these misfortunes with strength and forbearance. In the end, he benefited from the physical and spiritual fruits of his forbearance.

1.6 RESEARCH SCOPE

This study attempts to analyze Prophet Ya'qūb's style of parenting on the selected Qur'ānic verses. It is observed that there are 21 Qur'ānic verses mention sporadically on his style of parenting; 20 verses in *Sūrat Yūsuf* (verses 4, 5, 8, 13, 17, 18, 64-68, 83-87, 93, 94, 96-98) and one verse in *Sūrat al-Baqarah*. These verses will be analyzed to extract the main principles of Prophet Ya'qūb's style of parenting. Review of selected *tafāsir* of the Qur'ān such as *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* by Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-ʿAẓīm* by Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* by Hamka and *Tafsīr al-Miṣbāh* by M. Quraish Shihab will also be done for further elaboration.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is a qualitative research whereby data are gathered from the Qur'ān, in particular the 21 verses related to Prophet Ya'qūb mentioned above. Selected exegeses or *tafāsir* which are *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* by Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-ʿAẓīm* by Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* by Hamka and *Tafsīr al-Miṣbāh* by M. Quraish Shihab will be referred to so that the methodology of parenting of Prophet Ya'qūb could be analyzed and later be made relevant to today's context. Relevant *aḥādīth* of the Prophet will also be referred to so as to affirm the findings on Prophet Ya'qūb's parenting style. Other relevant secondary sources like books, journals and online

articles will also be consulted for confirmation of the findings and to make them suitable for today's usage.

1.8 LITERATURE REVIEW

The researcher has conducted reviews of considerable number of works related to the study on the Prophets and parenting including books, theses, dissertations, and articles. The reviews are done to identify how many related studies and academic works have been done to prevent any repetition of this topic before further study can be done.

The study on the Islamic Prophets receives favourable attention among the academic researchers over the years. This circumstances contributes to the production of various writings on the story of the Prophets starting from the early period of Islam. *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*² by Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī and *Qīṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'*³ by Ibn Kathīr are two of the earliest books on the stories of the Prophets. These books have stimulated the academicians especially in these present days to conduct further studies on the various themes in the stories of the Prophets.

Meanwhile, several Islamic scholars have done comprehensive writings on the theme of parenting from the Qur'ānic perspectives. One of the most known works on parenting is a book written by Abdullah Nāṣiḥ 'Ulwān (1976)⁴ entitled *Tarbiyyah al-Awlād fī al-Islām*. In this book, the author outlines effective parenting approaches on the children with reference to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah starting from birth to

² Al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr, *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī: Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Muluk* (Bayrūt: Dār Ibn Hazm, 2005).

³ Ibn Kathīr, Abū al-Fidā' 'Imād al-Dīn Ismā'īl, *Qīṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'* (*Stories of the Prophets*) (Riyad: International Islamic Publishing House, 2006).

⁴ Ulwan, Abdullah Nāṣiḥ, *Tarbiyyah al-Awlād fī al-Islām*, ed. Mohd Ikhwan Abdullah, (Kuala Lumpur: PTS Publications, 2015).

adulthood. Besides, Adnan Ḥasan Ṣālīḥ Bahārīts (1991)⁵ has written a book entitled *Mas'ūliyyah Ab al-Muslim fī Tarbiyyah al-Walad fī Marḥalah al-Ṭufūlah* which highlights on a smaller scope of parenting than *Tarbiyyah al-Awlād* as it emphasises on the responsibilities of fathers to the children in their childhood time from the Qur'ānic perspectives. Moreover, Ekram Beshir (1998) and Mohamed Rida Beshir (1998) have written a book entitled *Meeting the Challenge of Parenting in the West: An Islamic Perspective*.⁶ This book discloses the challenge of parenting in the West and the importance of *tarbiyyah* in parenting as indicated in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah to educate the children regardless of any environment.

In the study of the Prophets, Mohd Rusdi Ismail (2007) has written a dissertation on a comparative study of Prophet Ibrāhīm from the perspectives of the Qur'ān and the Bible.⁷ While Norakmal binti Abdul Hamid (2008) has written a comparison between the narrations of Prophet Ādam and Ḥawā' in the Qur'ān and that in the Bible.⁸ These studies found that different versions of narrations between the Qur'ān and the Bible lead to different theological implications.

Further readings reveal that the study on Prophet Ya'qūb's son, Prophet Yūsuf has received a huge attention in the academic world. For example, Zulina binti Zailani (2003) has written a dissertation entitled *A Literary Interpretation of the Story of Prophet Yūsuf in the Translated Text of the Qur'ān with Particular Reference to the*

⁵ Adnan Ḥasan Ṣālīḥ Bahārīts, *Mas'ūliyyah Ab al-Muslim fī Tarbiyyah al-Walad fī Marḥalah al-Ṭufūlah*, (Jaddah: Dār al-Mujtama', 1991).

⁶ Ekram Beshir and Mohamed Rida Beshir, *Meeting the Challenge of Parenting in the West: An Islamic Perspective* (Beltsville: Amana Publications, 1998).

⁷ Mohd Rusdi Ismail, *Prophet Ibrāhīm in the Qur'ān And The Bible: A Comparative Study of Dual Perspectives*, Dissertation, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2007).

⁸ Norakmal Binti Abdul Hamid, *The Story Of Creation In The Bible And The Qur'ān: A Comparative Analysis Of Their Theological Implications*, Dissertation, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2008).

Themes of Human Values.⁹ The work found that the narration has both sides of human life. The finding shows that human character comprises round and flat; good and bad, which thus reveal a unique sense of realism.

While other works on Prophet Yūsuf are *Kisah Yusuf dalam Al-Qur'ān* (*The Story of Yūsuf in The Qur'ān*) by Sahri Ramadan (1998),¹⁰ *Kisah Nabi Yusuf dalam Surat Yusuf: Studi Komparatif antara Tafsir al-Ibriz dan al-Azhar* (*The Story of Yūsuf in Sūrat Yūsuf: A Comparative Study between Tafsīr al-Ibriz and al-Azhar*) by Masrurah (2002) and *Nabi Yūsuf dan Saudara-saudaranya dalam Al-Qur'ān* (*Prophet Yusuf and His Brothers in the Qur'ān*) by Muhamad Nur Anwar (2008).¹¹ These dissertations found that the narrations on Prophet Yūsuf comply with a structured plot which began with exposition of conflicts, rising tension, climax and finally falling action and resolution.

In addition, Lutfan bin Jaes (2009) and Mohd Hisyam bin Abdul Rahim (2009) have written an article on the releventization of economic management and principles of Prophet Yūsuf in today's context.¹² The focus is on the useful method in overcoming economic instability such as inflation and deflation. The article is very inspiring as the same releventization approach will be done by the researcher in the study of Prophet Ya'qūb's parenting style.

⁹ Zulina binti Zailani, *A Literary Interpretation of the Story of Prophet Yūsuf in the Translated Text of the Qur'ān with Particular Reference to the Themes of Human Values*, Dissertation, Kuliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (Kuala Lumpur: International Islami University Malaysia, 2003).

¹⁰ Sahri Ramadan, *Kisah Yusuf dalam Al-Qur'ān*, Disertasi, Fakultas Ushuluddin (Yogyakarta: Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, 1998).

¹¹ Muhamad Nur Anwar, *Nabi Yusuf dan Saudara-saudaranya dalam Al-Qur'ān*, Disertasi, Fakultas Ushuluddin (Yogyakarta: Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, 2008).

¹² Lutfan Bin Jaes and Mohd Hisyam Bin Abdul Rahim, *Prinsip Pengurusan Unggul Dalam Menangani Masalah Ekonomi: Satu Analisa Daripada Kisah Nabi Yusuf* (Johor: Universiti Tun Hussein Onn, 2009).

Furthermore, one of the most significant and synonym narration in the Qur'ān related to the theme of parenting is the narration of Luqmān al-Ḥakīm in *Sūrat Luqmān*. In fact, the study on Luqmān received higher attention from researchers since a number of works are found on it such as *Nasehat Luqmān al-Hakīm dalam al-Qur'ān dan Implikasinya dalam Sistem Pendidikan Islam (Luqmān's Advice in the Qur'ān and its Implication in Islamic Education System)*¹³ by Abdul Ghoni (2001) and *Kisah Luqman dalam Sūrat Luqmān: Studi Perbandingan antara Tafsīr al-Alūsī dengan al-Rāzi (The Story of Luqmān in Sūrat Luqmān: Comparative Study between Tafsīr al-Alūsī and Al-Rāzi)* by Gholib (2001).¹⁴ These works are presented under the same theme of parenting from the Qur'ānic perspective, nonetheless they hover around Luqmān's advice as stated in *Sūrat Luqmān*. Precisely, Luqmān's approach in his parenting is different from that of Prophet Ya'qūb for there is no report of conflicts found in the earlier renditions. In addition, Rosnaaini Hamid, Suhanim Abdullah and Syahrul Faiz Abdullah (2012) in their work, *Pendidikan Keibubapaan Berdasarkan Surah Luqmān (Parenting Education in Sūrat Luqmān)*¹⁵ have developed a formula on parenting derived from the related verses found in *Sūrat Luqmān*.

Moreover, Robitoh Widi Astuti (2011) has done a more specific writings on the aspect of communication in parenting in her dissertation entitled *Komunikasi Orang Tua dan Anak Perspektif Kisah dalam Al-Qur'ān (The Communication of*

¹³ Abdul Ghoni, *Nasehat Luqman al-Hakim dalam al-Quran dan Implikasinya dalam Sistem Pendidikan Islam*, Disertasi, Fakultas Tarbiyah (Yogyakarta: Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, 2001).

¹⁴ Gholib, *Kisah Luqman dalam Surah Luqman: Studi Perbandingan antara Tafsir al-Alusi dengan al-Razi*. Skripsi, Fakultas Ushuluddin (Yogyakarta Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, 2001).

¹⁵ Rosnaaini Hamid, Suhanim Abdullah, and Syahrul Faiz Abdullah, *Pendidikan Keibubapaan Berdasarkan Surah Luqmān*, Dissertation, Fakulti Sains Kognitif dan Pendidikan (Kedah:Universiti Utara Malaysia, 2011).

Parents and Children from the Qur'ānic Perspective).¹⁶ The author narrows the scope of the study by focusing on the aspect of communications from several narrations in the Qur'ān including the one on Prophet Ya'qūb and Luqmān. The study emphasizes on the importance of communication in family in building a harmonious relationship amongst family members.

Further reviews found that there are a few writings on Prophet Ya'qūb's style of parenting. Manal Hatab (2013) has written an article entitled *Prophet Ya'qūb: A Role Model Father*.¹⁷ This article focuses on the role model of Prophet Ya'qūb as depicted in *Sūrat Yūsuf* in the Qur'ān. The great qualities of a role model shown in the personality of Prophet Ya'qūb as a Prophet as well as a father are briefly summarized in this article. However, this article is lacking in term of its reference to Qur'ānic exegeses. Therefore, further study has to be done to enhance the content and delivery of the message of Prophet Ya'qūb as a great model for parenting.

In a dissertation written by Futikhatur Rohmah (2013) with the title *Kasih Sayang Nabi Ya'qūb Kepada Yūsuf dan Saudara-saudaranya dalam Al-Qur'ān (Prophet Ya'qūb's Love towards Yūsuf and His Brothers in the Qur'ān)*,¹⁸ the writer focuses on the love theme in the narration of Prophet Ya'qūb and his sons. Since love among family members is one of the principles in parenting, further study on the main principles of Prophet Ya'qūb's parenting is significantly needed.

In conclusion, the above-mentioned works may be directly or indirectly related to the present study. Nonetheless, a few writings that discuss Prophet Ya'qūb

¹⁶ Robitoh Widi Astuti, *Komunikasi Orang Tua dan Anak Perspektif Kisah dalam Al-Qur'ān*, Disertasi, (Yogyakarta: Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, 2011).

¹⁷ Manal Hatab, "Prophet Ya'qūb: A Role Model Father," Virtual Mosque, <<http://www.virtualmosque.com/society/dawah/prophet-yaqub-a-role-model-father/>> (Accessed on 20 Mac, 2014).

¹⁸ Futikhatur Rohmah, *Kasih Sayang Nabi Ya'qub Kepada Yusuf dan Saudara-saudaranya dalam Al-Quran*, Disertasi, Fakultas Ushuluddin dan Pemikiran Islam, (Yogyakarta: Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, 2013).

have focused on other aspects other than parenting. Hence, the present study will emphasize on parenting method as applied by Prophet Ya‘qūb and as narrated in the Qur’ān.

1.9 RESEARCH JUSTIFICATION

There are numerous studies that have been conducted on the Prophets of Allāh as guidance to humankind. However, there are few that deal with parenting style by Prophet Ya‘qūb and they do not specifically analyze the method. The article written by Manal Hatab on Prophet Ya‘qūb’s parenting is very brief. Therefore the present research will attempt an analysis on 21 Qur’ānic verses that related to Prophet Ya‘qūb’s style of parenting with reference to four *tafsīr*: *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* and *Tafsīr al-Misbāḥ*.

Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī is one of the earliest *tafsīr* in Islam. It is said to be a collective *tafsīr*, very rich in content and a main source for academic research. Whereas, *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* is considered to be a summary of *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*. These two *tafsīr* are recognized as the most reliable reference in the study of *tafsīr*. Meanwhile, *Tafsīr al-Azhar* is the leading *tafsīr* in the modern period, which is written by Hamka, one of the most prominent scholars in the Malay Archipelago. While *Tafsīr al-Misbāḥ* is a recent *tafsīr* written by M. Quraish Shihab, a contemporary Indonesian scholar. Reviews of these four *tafsīr* are expected to provide additional value to the analysis of the verses.

In addition, this study is carried out as one of the many responses to the call for Islamization and integration of knowledge. Continuous efforts of releventization particularly on the narration of the Prophets need to be extended and intensified for the purpose of developing guidance in family upbringing in general and parenting in

specific. Therefore, the findings on the study of Prophet Ya‘qūb’s parenting style are an attempt to provide alternatives towards the recurring dilemma in parenting in present family institution.

CHAPTER TWO

PROPHET YA‘QŪB’S BACKGROUND AND HIS CHARACTERISTICS IN THE QUR’ĀN

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher will highlight the background of Prophet Ya‘qūb and his family. Since there is no account of their background recorded in the Qur’ān, several Qur’ānic scholars came to interpret and compare it with that of the Bible. This leads to a great expansion on the role and character of Prophet Ya‘qūb for they compose of the Biblical narrative and Judeo-Christian extensions on the story of the Prophets.¹⁹

Precisely, Prophet Ya‘qūb is mentioned by name in the Qur’ān 16 times in 10 different *sūrat*.²⁰ Nevertheless, there are only three significant events involving Prophet Ya‘qūb directly mentioned in the Qur’ān: the glad tidings of Prophet Ishāq and Prophet Ya‘qūb, the narrations of Prophet Yūsuf (Qur’ān 12), and the conversation between Prophet Ya‘qūb and his sons upon his death.²¹ The sequence of Prophet Yūsuf in *Sūrat Yūsuf* is considered as the most significant event for Prophet Ya‘qūb, who played an important role as a father and applied his magnificent parenting style on his children.

This parenting style is being depicted by the Qur’ān. For instance, Almighty Allāh gives considerable number of appraisal and recognition to Prophet Ya‘qūb such as people of knowledge (*ahl al-‘ilm*), righteous (*sālih*), being a seeker of forgiveness

¹⁹ *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, New Edition by P. J. Bearmen, “Ya‘qūb.”

²⁰ *Ibid*.

²¹ Ahmad Bahjat, *Sejarah Nabi-nabi Allah*, (Jakarta: Penerbit Lantera, 2006), 144.

(*mustaghfir*), patience (*ṣabr*), silent melancholy (*kaẓīm*), and optimism. These characteristics will be elaborated further in the last subtopic of this chapter.

2.2 THE BACKGROUND OF PROPHET YA‘QŪB

The details of the background of Prophet Ya‘qūb and his family are neither recorded by the Qur‘ān nor by authentic *hadīth* narrations. The limited information led certain scholars of *tafsīr* to include Biblical accounts in their writings such as Al-Ṭabarī in *Tārīkh*, Ibn Kathīr in *Qisas* and Hamka in *Tafsīr al-Azhar*. In the study of *tafsīr* and *hadīth*, these narrations are called *al-riwāyat al-Isrāīliyyāt*.

The acceptance of these narrations is debatable among Muslim scholars as they were doubtful of the Biblical narration’s authenticity. Therefore, certain scholars insisted on rejecting these narrations completely in order to preserve the honour of the Prophets and the reliability of the information, for there are many accounts in the Bible that may be incompatible with the Islamic narratives. This stance is in line with the saying of Prophet Muhammad:

Do not believe the People of the Book, nor reject what they say.
Rather, say “We believe in Almighty Allāh and in what was sent to
us.”²²

However, in certain circumstances these Biblical narrations are acceptable as long as they are not contrary to the Islamic conviction and *Sharī‘at* of Islam. In this context of discussion, the names of Prophet Ya‘qūb’s ancestors and descendants may be acceptable.

²² Al-Bukharī, Muḥammad bin Ismā‘īl, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, (Istanbul, Dār al-Da‘wah, 1992), *Kitāb Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān, Sūrat al-Baqarah, Bāb Qŭlū Āmannā Billāh Wamā Unzila Ilainā*, vol 4, 132.

2.2.1 The Origin of the Name of Ya‘qūb

In Arabic linguistics, the word *ya‘qūb* is derived from the word ‘*aqaba*’ meaning coming afterwards,²³ as Prophet Ya‘qūb was the successor of previous Prophets. He came after Prophet Ishāq and Prophet Ibrāhīm. He was selected as a Prophet and his prophethood came after his father, Prophet Ishāq, and his grandfather, Prophet Ibrāhīm. The word *ya‘qūb* also clearly refers to a father of many children (*kathīr al-dzuriyyat*).²⁴ This meaning is significant for Prophet Ya‘qūb as he was a father of 12 and there were Prophets who were selected among his descendants. Thus, *ya‘qūb* is a suitable name given by Almighty Allāh to him in accordance with his stature as a Prophet and an exemplary father of 12.

From the Biblical perspective, the word “*ya‘qūb*” derives from “‘*aqb*”, which means heel, based on the story of the twins’ struggling in their mother’s womb. It is narrated that when Rifqah was about to deliver the twins, they were quarreling in the womb on who should emerge out of the world first. Prophet Ya‘qūb played dirty by pulling his brother’s heel.²⁵ The Christians and Jews believe this event is the origin of how Prophet Ya‘qūb received his name. However, this view is rejected by Muslims for the story portrays Prophet Ya‘qūb as a deceiver whereas he was a truthful Prophet who came from an honourable lineage.

²³ Al-Marbāwī, Muhammad Idrīs Abd al-Ra‘ūf, *Qāmūs Idrīs al-Marbāwī*, 3rd Edition, (Kuala Lumpur, Darun Nu‘man, 1998), Juzū’ Thānī, 36. Cited as Al- Marbāwī.

²⁴ Muhammad Husni Aqlah, “*Jacob in the Holy Qur’ān and the Old Testament*,” (M.A. Thesis, Āl al-Bait University, 2003), 75.

²⁵ *The Holy Bible*, New Revised Standard Version, *Genesis* 25: 26, (Nashville, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), 15.

2.2.2 Prophet Ya‘qūb’s Ancestors

Prophet Ya‘qūb was from the lineage of honourable fathers. He was the grandson of Prophet Ibrāhīm, the son of Prophet Ishāq, and the father of Prophet Yūsuf.²⁶ Al-Ṭabarī, in his *Tārīkh*, stated that according to Ibn Ishāq, Prophet Ishāq married Rifqah bint Bethuel bin Ilyās, and she bore him a pair of twin sons, al-‘Īs the elder and Ya‘qūb the younger. Then, al-‘Īs married the daughter of his paternal uncle, named Basmah bint Ismāīl bin Ibrāhīm, and she bore him al-Rūm bin Esau. Meanwhile, Prophet Ya‘qūb married the two daughters of another paternal uncle, Liyā and Rahīl.²⁷

Regarding Prophet Ya‘qūb’s marriages, Hamka, in his explanation on Prophet Yūsuf’s dream, stated that Prophet Ya‘qūb had two wives, Liyā and Rahīl, and two concubines named Zilfah and Bilhah. Both of his wives were his cousins, the daughters of his paternal uncle, Laban.²⁸ However, there are two versions of his second marriage to Rahīl. The first version reports that he married Rahīl after Liyā died, which has no issue of jurisprudence among the scholars. On the other hand, the second version states that Prophet Ya‘qūb married Rahīl when Liyā was still alive. This version raises discrepancy as it is forbidden in Islam for a man to marry two sisters at the same time. However, Hamka stressed that this tradition was permissible in the *Sharī‘at* of the previous Prophets as described in the Torah.²⁹ From the two wives and two concubines, Prophet Ya‘qūb was granted 12 sons.³⁰

²⁶ Qur’ān 19: 49.

²⁷ Al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad Ibn Jarīr. *The History of al-Ṭabarī*. Ed. William M. Brinner. (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1987), vol 2, Prophets and Patriarchs, 134. This information is derived from The Bible, *Genesis* 36, 22-23.

²⁸ Hamka, Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, (Surabaya, Penerbit Yayasan Latimojong, 1978), vol 12, 180. Cited as Hamka. This information is derived from The Bible, *Genesis* 36, 22-23.

²⁹ Ibid, vol 13, 40.

³⁰ Ibid, vol 12, 180.