

## The Theoretical Framework of *Amtsāl* in the Qur'an: Enhancing Understanding of Qur'anic Content

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**Abstract.** This article aims to analyze the theoretical conception of *amtsāl* verses in the Qur'an and its relevance in understanding the contents of the Qur'an. This study is necessary because the Qur'an has a strategic position in the movement of activities life of Muslims, namely the Qur'an must be glorified, become a good guide from aspects of worship, *aqidah*, and morals, its meaning is understood, practiced, socialized, and maintained by humans. One way to understand the verses of the Qur'an in a good, correct, and comprehensive manner is to parse and study the theoretical conception of *amtsāl* Qur'an because it contains *matsāl* verses. This study uses a qualitative method with a library approach. This study finds that the term *amtsāl* Qur'an is a parable or style of beautiful expression ordained by Allah in the Qur'an in the form of a short, clear, and concise expression to serve as a good role model in order to increase faith in Allah. The term *amtsāl* Qur'an shows several benefits to facilitate its use, namely showing something *ma'qul* in a concrete form so that it is easily understood by humans, revealing its essence and hinting at something invisible as if it becomes visible, or making the unseen as if can be witnessed directly, also provide motivation for things that are liked. Then, there are four kinds of *amtsāl*, namely *amtsāl qissab*, *amtsāl lil bal*, *amtsāl al-wasfi* and *amtsāl al-i'tibar*. While in terms of *amtsāl* there are three, namely *amtsāl musarrabah*, *amtsāl kaminah*, and *amtsāl mursalah*. The results of the study show that the theoretical conception of *amtsāl* Qur'an has relevance in understanding the content of the Qur'an which contains *tamtsil* verses. This conclusion theoretically contributes to understanding the Qur'an properly and correctly and being able to ground the teachings that originate from the Qur'an.

**Keywords:** *amtsāl* Qur'an; function of the Qur'an; kinds of *amtsāl*; content of the Qur'an; *amtsāl* method

### Introduction

One of the uniqueness of the Qur'an for Muslims is in the aspect of teaching methods and conveying its messages to the human soul.<sup>1</sup> The method of the Qur'an when conveying these messages is the shortest, easiest and clearest method which is one of the methods of teaching the Qur'an,<sup>2</sup> namely when conveying messages through the expression *matsāl* (parable; plural '*amtsāl*') in basic and abstract things.<sup>3</sup> Of course, we can find this method, for example when the Qur'an

<sup>1</sup> Samir Mahmoud, "Qur'an: Curriculum Realities and Ideals," in *Curriculum Renewal for Islamic Education*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2021), 17–34, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429276811-3>; Hafiz Umair Gulzar, Zobia Parveen, and Hafiza Qurat-ul-Ayn Fatima, "An Introduction to 'Al-Amthāl Fī Al-Qur'ān Al-Karīm' by Ibn Al-Qayyim," *Al-Qamar* 5, no. 4 (December 31, 2022): 37–50, <https://doi.org/10.53762/ALQAMAR.05.04.E03>.

<sup>2</sup> Dwi Ratnasari and Eko Ngabdul Shodikin, "The Values of Islamic Education in the *Amtsāl* (Parables) of the Qur'an," *At Turots: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 2 (January 3, 2021): 106–17, <https://doi.org/10.51468/JPI.V3I2.73>.

<sup>3</sup> Desti Widiani, "Amtsāl of the Qur'an and Its Relevance in Islamic Education," *At-Tajdid* 11, no. 1 (April 9, 2022): 9–15, <https://doi.org/10.52640/TAJDID.V11I1.252>; Subur Subur, "Media for Education Moral Value Based

explains the oneness of God<sup>4</sup> and those who unite God,<sup>5</sup> polytheism and behavior of polytheists,<sup>6</sup> attitudes and realities that will be faced and experienced by monotheists and polytheists people, as well as regarding noble deeds in general.<sup>7</sup> These things are revealed by the Qur'an through parables that are concrete. This method is intended to explain and confirm the meaning of the message contained therein.<sup>8</sup>

By using this concrete parable, the listeners and readers of the Qur'an will feel as if the message conveyed by the Qur'an is seen directly. Therefore, the *amtsāl* method contained in the Qur'an can encourage the soul to accept the intended meaning and make the mind feel satisfied with it.<sup>9</sup>

The parables in the Qur'an can be categorized in the group of purely literary stories, because parables are one of the best ways to express a thought in the form of Arabic literature. Therefore, in expressing a thought, both in the form of news, orders and prohibitions as well as in the form of advice, the Qur'an always takes various ways to lead humans to the perfection of their human aspects, among others by telling factual or symbolic stories or parables.<sup>10</sup> So that experts state that the parables contained in the Qur'an are examples of wisdom for those that cannot be reached by human hearing and sight, and to provide guidance to souls with what they know.

Even part of Allah's arrangement for His servants is to create parables for them and from themselves and to fulfill their needs, so that they like to think about until they know what their outward sight and hearing cannot reach. So whoever thinks of the parable that Allah has mentioned in His book, then indeed he becomes a pious person<sup>11</sup> with which one is required to be able to know if some one wants to explore the content and meaning verses of the Qur'an properly. This is confirmed by Allah through His word in Q.S. al-'Ankabut verse 43: "And these examples We present to the people, but none will understand them except those of knowledge."

Studies on the *amtsāl* in the Qur'an have been carried out by many scholars and researchers. First, Ali's research on parables in the Qur'an.<sup>12</sup> Ali is studying the function of *amtsāl* in the Qur'an found that the Qur'an contains many *amtsāl* verses. Then, Makrifah's research on the types and

on Metaphor (Matsal)," *IQRO: Journal of Islamic Education* 4, no. 1 (May 2, 2021): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.24256/IQRO.V4I1.1820>; Yazida Ichsan, Unik Hanifah Salsabila, and Difa'ul Husna, "Amtsal and Qashas Normative Study: Analysis of Islamic Education Implementation," *Journal of Islam and Science* 7, no. 1 (June 30, 2020): 13–16, <https://doi.org/10.24252/JIS.V7I1.13636>; Bambang Irawan, "The Linguistic Al-Qur'an And Linguistic Approach In Interpretation Of The Al-Qur'an," *Qolamuna : Jurnal Studi Islam* 3, no. 2 (February 23, 2018): 267–82.

<sup>4</sup> Syed Sultan Bee Bt. Packeer Mohamed et al., "The Description of Allah's S.W.T. Oneness Based on the Parables in the Qur'an," *Journal of Islamic, Social, Economics and Development* 3, no. 14 (2018): 122–37; Hairul Anwar, "Konsep Tuhan Di Dalam Al-Qur'an," *Al Burhan: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Dan Pengembangan Budaya Al-Qur'an* 15, no. 1 (June 16, 2015): 50, <https://doi.org/10.53828/ALBURHAN.V15I1.60>.

<sup>5</sup> Abdul Rasyid Ridho, "Rahasia Ayat-Ayat Amtsāl Tentang Kehidupan Dunia Dalam Al-Qur'an," *El-Umdah* 1, no. 2 (December 1, 2018): 168–97, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ELUMDAH.V1I2.551>; Hafni Bustami, "Ayat-Ayat Tamtsil Al-Qur'an (Analisis Stilistika)," *Al-Ta Lim Journal* 20, no. 1 (February 20, 2013): 285–98, <https://doi.org/10.15548/JT.V20I1.25>.

<sup>6</sup> Mahbub Nuryadien, "Metode Amtsāl; Metode Al-Qur'an Membangun Karakter," *Al-Tarbawi Al-Haditsab* 1, no. 1 (January 5, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.24235/TARBAWI.V1I1.1227>.

<sup>7</sup> Syarifah Huswatun Miswar, *Benda Dalam Perumpamaan Al-Qur'an* (Guepedia, 2018), 17.

<sup>8</sup> Abd. Rahman Dahlan, *Kaidab-Kaidab Penafsiran Al-Qur'an (Disusun Berdasarkan Al-Qawa'id Al-Hisan Li Tafsir Al-Qur'an Karya Al-Sa'di)* (Bandung: Mizan, 1998).

<sup>9</sup> Badr al-Din Muhammad ibn Abdillah Al-Zarkasyi, *Al-Burhan Fi Ulum Al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar Al-Ma'arif, n.d.), 486–487.

<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Quraish Shihab, *Wawasan Al-Qur'an: Tafsir Tematik Atas Pelbagai Persoalan Umat* (Bandung: Mizan Pustaka, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> Ali al-Hakim Al-Tirmidzi, *Al-Amtsal Min Al-Kitab Wa Al-Sunnah* (Beirut: Muassasatul Kutub at-Tsaqofiah, 1989).

<sup>12</sup> Muhammad Ali, "Fungsi Perumpamaan Dalam Al-Qur'an," *Tarbawiyah* 10, no. 02 (February 17, 2017): 21–31, <https://e-journal.metrouniv.ac.id/index.php/tarbawiyah/article/view/344>.

urgency of *amtsāl* in the Qur'an.<sup>13</sup> Makrifah's study found that there are three types of *amtsāl*, namely *amtsāl musarrabah*, *amtsāl kaminah*, and *amtsāl mursalah*. However, Ali and Makrifah's research is still descriptive without in-depth analysis. In addition, they do not show the relevance and contribution of *amtsāl* knowledge to the implementation of the contents of the Qur'an.

Other researchers who studied this theme associated a lot of *amtsāl* with education. Juwono examines the educational curriculum version of the *amtsāl* Qur'an,<sup>14</sup> Ratnasari and Shodikin examines the values of Islamic education in the study of *amtsāl* Qur'an,<sup>15</sup> Suud examines the position of *amtsāl* Qur'an in the study of Islamic educational psychology,<sup>16</sup> Tabrani and Muluk examines the method *amtsāl* in learning according to the perspective of the Qur'an,<sup>17</sup> Qosyim examines the educational dimension in *amtsāl* from the perspective of the Islamic religious education curriculum.<sup>18</sup> In addition to linking education, Salamah, Hamdani, Nugraha, Mauladi, and Ihwanudin also analyze the implementation of *amtsāl* in understanding the verses of sharia economic law.<sup>19</sup> While other researchers, only focus on studying the *amtsāl* in one verse or one surah in the Qur'an. Nursyamsu studied *amtsāl* and its benefits in surah al-Baqarah verse 261,<sup>20</sup> Kuswati studied *amtsāl* in surah Ibrahim verses 24-25,<sup>21</sup> Marlion and Wijayanti studied the meaning of parable verses in sura Ali Imran.<sup>22</sup>

Studies related to *amtsāl* in the Qur'an from those available seem to be separate. Even though there are so many *amtsāl* verses in the Qur'an. That is the difference between previous research and this research. In the context of this study, the author does not limit the study of *amtsāl* to one verse, surah, or one particular theme, but the discussion is directed at the theoretical conception of *amtsāl* science in the Qur'an, then the relevance and contribution of *amtsāl* to the implementation of the contents of the Qur'an. Thus, the sampling of *amtsāl* in the Qur'an is in accordance with the needs of this study.

The Qur'an has a strategic position in the motion of the life activities of Muslims. The Qur'an is not only a valuable reading but also a guide for humans in the aspects of worship, faith, and morals. One way to understand the verses of the Qur'an in a good, correct, and comprehensive manner is to decipher the theoretical conception of the *amtsāl* Qur'an because it contains *matsāl* verses. Thus, this study aims to analyze the theoretical conception of *amtsāl* Qur'an and its relevance in understanding the contents of the Qur'an. Theoretically, this research contributes to science,

<sup>13</sup> Nurul Makrifah, "Macam Urgensi *Amtsāl* Dalam Al-Qur'an," *At-Turost* 7, no. 2 (August 24, 2020): 216–32, <https://doi.org/10.52491/AT.V7I2.21>.

<sup>14</sup> Hendro Juwono, "Kurikulum Pendidikan Versi *Amtsāl* Al-Qur'an," *Munafasyah* 2 (May 22, 2020): 240–62, <http://ejournal.stib.ac.id/index.php/mnq/article/view/79>.

<sup>15</sup> Dwi Ratnasari and Eko Ngabdul Shodikin, "The Values of Islamic Education in the *Amtsāl* (Parables) of the Qur'an," *At Turost* 3, no. 2 (January 3, 2021): 106–17, <https://doi.org/10.51468/JPI.V3I2.73>.

<sup>16</sup> Fitriah M. Suud, "*Amtsāl* Al-Qur'an: Sebuah Kajian Dalam Psikologi Pendidikan Islam," *Fikrotuna* 5, no. 1 (July 1, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.32806/JF.V5I1.2952>.

<sup>17</sup> Tabrani Tabrani and Tabrani Muluk, "Metode *Amtsāl* Dalam Pembelajaran Menurut Perspektif Al-Qur'an," *Al-Fikra* 18, no. 1 (February 10, 2020): 52–63, <https://doi.org/10.24014/AF.V18I1.7712>.

<sup>18</sup> Roshiful Aqli Qosyim, "Dimensi Edukatif Dalam *Amtsāl* Al-Qur'an Dan Kajian Perspektif Kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam," *Indonesian Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 2, no. 3 (November 30, 2021): 169–82, <https://doi.org/10.33367/IJHASS.V2I3.1975>.

<sup>19</sup> Najmah Salamah et al., "Implementasi Ilmu *Amtsāl* Al-Qur'an Dalam Memahami Ayat-Ayat Hukum Ekonomi Syariah," *Misykat* 6, no. 2 (2021): 137–56.

<sup>20</sup> Nursyamsu Nursyamsu, "*Amtsāl* Al-Qur'an Dan Faidah-Faidahnya (Kajian Q.S. Al-Baqarah Ayat 261)," *Jurnal Al-Irfani* 5, no. 1 (May 6, 2019): 46–59, <http://ejournal.kopertais4.or.id/sasambo/index.php/alirfani/article/view/3479>.

<sup>21</sup> Kuswati Kuswati, "*Amtsāl* of the Qur'an in Dakwah: Actualization of Quality Humans Based on Surah Ibrahim: 24-25," *Al-Risalah* 12, no. 2 (July 10, 2021): 331–45, <https://doi.org/10.34005/ALRISALAH.V12I2.1450>.

<sup>22</sup> Ferki Ahmad Marlion and Tri Yuliana Wijayanti, "Makna Ayat-Ayat Perumpamaan Di Dalam Surat Ali Imran," *An-Nida'* 43, no. 2 (December 30, 2019): 125–43, <https://doi.org/10.24014/AN-NIDA.V43I2.12320>.

especially in understanding the Qur'an properly and correctly as well as being able to ground the teachings originating from the Qur'an.

This study uses a qualitative approach to solving the problems studied by describing the research object in detail.<sup>23</sup> While the data collection technique used the library method<sup>24</sup> in the form of a documentation study to collect several verses from the Qur'an which contained *tamtsāl*, then studied comprehensively regarding their relevance and contribution to understanding the contents of the Qur'an.

## Discussion

### *Meaning of Amtsal*

The term *amtsāl* comes from the word *matsāl* which consists of the letters *mim*, *tsa*, and *lam*, which convey the meaning of a comparison between something and something else, or this one like that. However, in this case, the author will reveal the meaning of *amtsāl* in the Qur'an both etymologically and terminologically as well as some of the views of the scholars and the authors themselves.

When viewed etymologically, the word *amtsāl* is the plural form of the word *matsāl* and the word 'misal' which means, for example a parable, or something that resembles and compares. Whereas terminologically, the term *amtsāl* is an expression of words that are narrated and are already popular with the intention of resembling the conditions contained in those words with the circumstances of something that is why those words are said.<sup>25</sup>

Sayyid Quthb (d. 1966) stated that *amtsāl* in the Qur'an is to describe the condition of nations in the past and their morals which have disappeared.<sup>26</sup> A poet Zuhair and Nabighah al-Dzibyani as quoted by Chirzin stated that *amtsāl* is usually used for something about a great story.<sup>27</sup> *Matsāl* is highlighting an abstract meaning into a sensory form so that it becomes beautiful and attractive.

Zamakhshari (d. 1143) has conditioned the three meanings of this *amtsāl* as contained in his book, *Tafsir al-Kasyshaf*, that *amtsāl* according to the origin of the words they mean *al-misl* and *al-nasir* (which are similar, which are comparable). Then every word that is valid, popular, which equates something (person, situation and so on) with students or what is contained in that word, is called *matsāl*. They will not make it as a *matsāl* that deserves to be accepted and popularized, except for words that contain oddities from several aspects.<sup>28</sup> He also revealed that the word *matsāl* was borrowed (used) to indicate a situation, character or story if the three are considered the most important, and have peculiarities. *Amtsāl* is a particular concept that has its own specificity and the concept of *amtsāl* is a form of *majāz* which then serves as a builder of poetic art in general.<sup>29</sup>

The term *amtsāl* is another form of a comparative term whose usage is influenced by usage in the Qur'an. Literary critics since the era of Abu 'Ubaidah (w. 207/822) and al-Jāhiz (w. 255/868) define *matsāl* or *tamtsāl* as poetic illustrative concepts similar to *tashbīb*, which in classical Arabic literature and poetry not only has the function of making the object of expression more beautiful and clear, but also *tamtsāl*. The similarities are both of them talk about parables and likenesses.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Jack Katz, "A Theory of Qualitative Methodology: The Social System of Analytic Fieldwork," *CODESRIA* 1, no. 1–2 (July 3, 2015): 131–46, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23754745.2015.1017282>.

<sup>24</sup> Marc J. Ventresca and John W. Mohr, "Archival Research Methods," *The Blackwell Companion to Organizations*, October 23, 2017, 805–28, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405164061.CH35>.

<sup>25</sup> Muhammad Chirzin, *Al-Qur'an Dan Ulumul Qur'an*, ed. M. Haji Sonhadji, Abdul Jabar, and Nurul Ummahati (Yogyakarta: Dana Bhakti Prima Yasa, 1998).

<sup>26</sup> Sayyid Quthb, *At-Tashwirul Fanniyil Qur'an* (Beirut: Darusy Syuruq, 1982), 242.

<sup>27</sup> Chirzin, *Al-Qur'an Dan Ulumul Qur'an*, 126.

<sup>28</sup> Abu al-Qasim Mahmud ibn Umar Al-Zamakhshari, *Tafsir Al-Kasyshaf* (Kairo: Dār Al-Llai, n.d.), 281.

<sup>29</sup> Al-Zamakhshari, 281.

<sup>30</sup> M. Nur Kholis Setiawan, *Al-Qur'an Kitab Sastra Terbesar* (Yogyakarta: eLSAQ Press, 2005).

Meanwhile, the difference lies in the scope of the two terms or the term *tamtsil* with *tashbih*. According to al-Jurjānī (w. 471/1078), the difference is that *tashbih* is more general in scope, so that every *tamtsil* is *tashbih*, but not every *tashbih* is a *tamtsil*.<sup>31</sup>

On the other hand, as revealed by Mardan, that there are also those who see the difference between the two in the aspect of emphasis and meaning in the Qur'an.<sup>32</sup> The word *tamtsil* can mean a parable, it can also be interpreted as a comparison. Meanwhile, the word *tashbih* can only be interpreted as a parable or likeness. Then the word *tamtsil* can be used to show parables to things that are immaterial in nature. While the word *tashbih* is used to show parables and likenesses to things that are material in nature. So there are several opinions say that the *amtsāl* of the Qur'an cannot be interpreted with an etymological meaning, namely *al-syabih* and *al-nasir*. Nor can it be interpreted with the meaning mentioned in the books in the language used by the modifiers of *amtsāls*, because, the *amtsāls* of the Qur'an are not words that are used to equate something with the contents of those words. Nor can it be interpreted in terms of anthology according to *bayan* scholars, because the *amtsāl* Qur'an is not *isti'arab* and their use is also not very popular. Therefore, the last definition that is more in line with the understanding of the *amtsāl* Qur'an, namely highlighting the meaning in an interesting and solid form (saying) and having a deep influence on the soul, either in the form of *tashbih* or free speech.

Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 1350) also defines the *amtsāl* of the Qur'an by equating something with something else in terms of law and bringing something that is abstract (*ma'qul*) closer to something sensory (concrete, *mahsus*), or bringing one of the two meanings closer to the other and regard one as the other,<sup>33</sup> that is the resemblance of a situation with another situation, for the same purpose, namely the narrator is simulating something with the original.<sup>34</sup> For example: "rubah ramiyah min ghairi ramin", meaning how many calamities were caused by the defeat of the archers. The person who first said this was Hakam bin Yaghuts Naqri, he made the parable of someone who lost to a disaster even though sometimes it was true. Another opinion states that the *amtsāl* of the Qur'an is showing an abstract understanding in a beautiful expression. Short and interesting that hit the soul, both in the form of *tashbih* and *majāz mursal*.<sup>35</sup>

From some of the meanings above, the writer concludes that the *amtsāl* Qur'an is a parable or expressions with a beautiful style of language given by Allah. through the Qur'an, how many short, clear and concise expressions to use as a good example in order to increase our faith in Allah.

### **Forms of *Amtsāl* in the Qur'an**

As for the first person who compiled the knowledge of the *amtsāl* Qur'an was Abdurrahman Muhammad bin Husain al-Naisaburi, then al-Mawardi (d. 1058), Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyah (d. 1350) and also Jalaluddin al-Suyuti (d. 1505). According to al-Qatthan (d. 1999) in his book, that the *amtsāl* Qur'an is divided into three categories of *musarrabah amtsāl*, *kaminah amtsāl* and *mursalah amtsāl*.<sup>36</sup>

#### 1. *Amtsāl* Musarrabah

*Amtsāl musarrabah* are verses of the Qur'an in which there is the word *matsāl* or something that indicates *tashbih* (similarity). *Amtsāl* like this can be found in many verses of the Qur'an. The

<sup>31</sup> 'Abd al-Qāhir Al-Jurjānī, *Asrār Al-Balāgha*, ed. Hellmut Ritter (Istanbul: Government Press, 1954).; 'Abd al-Qāhir Al-Jurjānī, *Dalā'il Al-i'jāz*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shakir (Kairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 2004).

<sup>32</sup> Mardan Mardan, *Al-Qur'an: Sebnah Pengantar Memahami Al-Qur'an Secara Utuh* (Jakarta: Pustaka Mapan, 2009).

<sup>33</sup> Ibn Al-Qayyim, *A'lan Al Munaqqi'in* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilaiyah, 1993), 116.

<sup>34</sup> Manna Al-Qatthan, *Mabābis Fi Ulum Al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Muassasat al-Risalah, 1993), 283.

<sup>35</sup> Ahmad Syadili, *Ulumul Al-Qur'an* (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 1997), 35.

<sup>36</sup> Al-Qatthan, *Mabābis Fi Ulum Al-Qur'an*, 44.

following is an example of a verse contained in Q.S. al-Baqarah verses 17-20 about the hypocrites as follows:

مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا فَلَمَّا أَضَاءَتْ مَا حَوْلَهُ ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ صُمُّ بُكْمٌ عُمَى فَهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ أَوْ كَصَيْبٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فِيهِ ظُلُمَاتٌ وَرَعْدٌ وَبَرْقٌ يَجْعَلُونَ أَصْبَعَهُمْ فِيِٓءَادَانِهِمْ مِّنَ الصَّوَاعِقِ حَذَرَ الْمَوْتِ وَاللَّهُ مُحِيطٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ يَكَادُ الْبَرْقُ يَخْطَفُ أَبْصَارَهُمْ كُلَّمَا أَضَاءَ لَهُمْ مَشَوْا فِيهِ وَإِذَا أَظْلَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ قَامُوا وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَذَهَبَ بِسَمْعِهِمْ وَأَبْصَرِهِمْ إِنَّا اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

17. Their example is that of one who kindled a fire, but when it illuminated what was around him, Allah took away their light and left them in darkness [so] they could not see. 18. Deaf, dumb and blind - so they will not return [to the right path]. 19. Or [it is] like a rainstorm from the sky within which is darkness, thunder and lightning. They put their fingers in their ears against the thunderclaps in dread of death. But Allah is encompassing of the disbelievers. 20. The lightning almost snatches away their sight. Every time it lights [the way] for them, they walk therein; but when darkness comes over them, they stand [still]. And if Allah had willed, He could have taken away their hearing and their sight. Indeed, Allah is over all things competent.

In this verse, Allah has made two forms of similes (*matsāl*) for hypocrites, namely *matsāl* which is pleasing to fire (*naar*). Because in fire there is an element of light, and *matsāl* which is pleased with water (*ma'i*) or like) people who are hit by) heavy rain from the sky..." because in water there is the material of life and the revelation that descends from the sky intends to illuminate the heart and turn it on. Allah has also mentioned the position and facilities of hypocrites in two situations. On the other hand, they are like people who light a fire (*naar*) for information and benefits, considering they get material benefits because they enter Islam. However, on the other hand, Islam does not influence "His Nur" on their hearts. Because Allah has also removed the light (*nur*) that is in the fire, Allah has removed the light (which watered) them and allowed the element of "burning" that was in them. This is their parable concerning fire (*naar*). As for the *matsāl* for those who are pleased with water (*ma'i*), Allah resembles them to the situation of a person who is hit by a heavy rain accompanied by complete darkness, thunder and lightning, so that the person's strength is torn apart and he puts his fingers to block both of them. It describes the Qur'an with all its warnings, prohibitions. His book for them is like a thunderbolt (lightning) that comes crashing down. Thus Allah makes parables.<sup>37</sup>

The revelation of the Qur'an which was sent down by Allah from the sky for the life of the heart is likened to rain water which is sent down for life on the surface of the earth with plants. And the heart is likened to a valley. Currents of water flowing down the valley, carrying foam and garbage. Likewise guidance, if when it flows in the heart it will affect lust, by eliminating it. This is the *matsāl* ma'i in His words, "He (Allah) has sent down rainwater from the sky...." (Q.S ar-Ra'd verse 17). Thus, Allah made the *matsāl* to explain between right and wrong.

## 2. Amsāl Kaminah

*Amsāl kaminah* is a parable that is not clearly stated in the word *tamtsāl*, but it shows beauty, interesting meaning and its reactions is short, solid and has its own effect when transferred to something similar to it.<sup>38</sup>

Some examples of verses in the Qur'an that indicate the form of the *amsāl kaminah* include the following:

First, Q.S. al-Baqarah verse 68.

<sup>37</sup> Fachruddin HS, *Ensiklopedia Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: PT. Rineka Cipta, 1992), 284.

<sup>38</sup> Al-Qatthan, *Mababis Fi Ulum Al-Qur'an*, 358.

قَالُوا ادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُبَيِّنْ لَنَا مَا هِيَ قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقْرَةٌ لَا فَارِضٌ وَلَا بَكْرٌ عَوَانُ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ فافْعَلُوا مَا تُؤْمَرُونَ

68. They said, "Call upon your Lord to make clear to us what it is." [Moses] said, "[Allah] says, 'It is a cow which is neither old nor virgin, but median between that,' so do what you are commanded."

Second, Q.S. al-Baqarah verse 260.

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ أَرِنِي كَيْفَ تُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ قَالَ أَوْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنْ تُوْمِنُ قَالَ بَلَىٰ وَلَكِن لِّيَطْمَئِنَّ قَلْبِي قَالَ فَخُذْ أَرْبَعَةً مِّنَ الطَّيْرِ فَصُرْهُنَّ إِلَيْكَ ثُمَّ اجْعَلْ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ جَبَلٍ مِّنْهُنَّ جُزْءًا ثُمَّ ادْعُهُنَّ يَأْتِينَكَ سَعْيًا وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

260. And [mention] when Abraham said, "My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead." [Allah] said, "Have you not believed?" He said, "Yes, but [I ask] only that my heart may be satisfied." [Allah] said, "Take four birds and commit them to yourself. Then [after slaughtering them] put on each hill a portion of them; then call them - they will come [flying] to you in haste. And know that Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise."

Third, Q.S. an-Nisa' verse 123.

لَيْسَ بِأَمَانَتِكُمْ وَلَا أَمَانِي أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مَن يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا يُجْزَ بِهِ وَلَا يَجِدْ لَهُ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا

123. Paradise is not [obtained] by your wishful thinking nor by that of the People of the Scripture. Whoever does a wrong will be recompensed for it, and he will not find besides Allah a protector or a helper.

Fourth, QS. Yusuf verse 64.

قَالَ هَلْ ءَامَنُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا كَمَا أَمِنْتُكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَخِيهِ مِن قَبْلُ فَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ حَفِظًا وَهُوَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّحِيمِينَ

64. He said, "Should I entrust you with him except [under coercion] as I entrusted you with his brother before? But Allah is the best guardian, and He is the most merciful of the merciful."

### 3. *Amtsāl* Mursalah

*Amtsāl mursalah* are free sentences that do not use *tashbīh* words clearly. But those sentences apply as *matsāl*. And there is also a main feature that is the same as the main feature of proverbs, the expressions or sentences are concise, containing comparisons, parables, advice, life principles, or rules of conduct.<sup>39</sup> Some examples of verses of the Qur'an on this matter are as follows:

قُلْ كُلٌّ يَعْمَلُ عَلَىٰ شَاكِلَتِيهِ فَرُبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ هُوَ أَهْدَىٰ سَبِيلًا

84. Say, "Each works according to his manner, but your Lord is most knowing of who is best guided in way" (Q.S. al-Isra [17]: 84).

According to al-Qurthubi (d. 1273), that the verse above functions as an *amtsāl* which compares the attitudes of people who are *istiqamah* with those who have no stand.<sup>40</sup> Al-Qurthubi also explains that the *amtsāl* of the Qur'an is divided into four forms, namely as follows:

First, *amtsāl qisab*. Like parables that have relevance to things that are unseen and are difficult for the human mind to reach. With it, Allah describes it in the form of a story, so that it is easily understood by humans, especially Muslims. For example in QS ar-Ra'ad verse 35 as follows:

مَثَلُ الْجَنَّةِ الَّتِي وَعَدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ أُكُلُهَا دَائِمٌ وَظُلُّهَا تِلْكَ عُقْبَى الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَعُقْبَى الْكَافِرِينَ النَّارُ

<sup>39</sup> Sya'bah Muhammad Ismail, *Al-Madkhal Ii Dirasah Al-Our'an Wa Al-Sunnah Wa Al-Ulum Al-Islamiyah* (Kairo: al-Anshar, 1980), 496-497.

<sup>40</sup> Mardan, *Al-Qur'an: Sebuah Pengantar Memahami Al-Qur'an Secara Utub*, 176.

“The example of Paradise, which the righteous have been promised, is [that] beneath it rivers flow. Its fruit is lasting, and its shade. That is the consequence for the righteous, and the consequence for the disbelievers is the Fire”

Second, *amtsāl lil hal*. Term *amtsāl lil hal* this is a parable in the form of describing the situation of one (or human) with another. As stated in QS. al-Baqarah verse 17 as follows:

مَثَلُهُمْ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي اسْتَوْقَدَ نَارًا فَلَمَّا أَضَاءَتْ مَا حَوْلَهُ ذَهَبَ اللَّهُ بِنُورِهِمْ وَتَرَكَهُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ

“Their example is that of one who kindled a fire, but when it illuminated what was around him, Allah took away their light and left them in darkness [so] they could not see”

Third, *amtsāl al-wasfi*. That is a parable that describes the nature that is likened to it. As stated in Q.S. an-Nahl verse 60 as follows:

لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ مَثَلُ السَّوْءِ وَلِلَّهِ الْمَثَلُ الْأَعْلَىٰ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

“For those who do not believe in the Hereafter is the description of evil; and for Allah is the highest attribute. And He is Exalted in Might, the Wise”

Fourth, *amtsāl al-i'tibar*. That is a parable that shows the nature of being amazed at something. For example, the depiction of the power of Allah and His greatness in creating from the smallest to the largest creatures. For example, the words of Allah in Q.S. al-Zukhruf verse 59 as follows:

إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا عَبْدٌ أَنْعَمْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلْنَاهُ مَثَلًا لِّبَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ

“Jesus was not but a servant upon whom We bestowed favor, and We made him an example for the Children of Israel”

According to al-Qurthubi, the verse above explains the evidence of the power of Allah who created 'Isa (without a father, then a miracle was given to him in the form of reviving the dead, healing stripes and blindness) in which no creature can match moreover to make creation similar to Him.<sup>41</sup>

Scholars have different opinions about these verses which they call the *amtsāl mursalah*, what or how is the law used as a *matsāl*? In this case, there are two opinions of scholars. First, that people who use *amtsāl mursalah* have left their adab towards the Qur'an. This is because Allah sent down the Qur'an not to be used as *matsāl*, but to contemplate and practice its contents. One example of the *amtsāl mursalah* in the Qur'an which is controversial in its use is Q.S. al-Kafirun verse 6 as follows:

لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ

“For you is your religion, and for me is my religion”

This verse can be used as a *matsāl* when they leave each other (because of disagreements), even though this is not justified. Because Allah sent down the Qur'an not to be used as *matsāl*, but to contemplate and then practice its contents.<sup>42</sup> The second says that there is no prohibition if someone uses the verses of the Qur'an as a *matsāl* in a serious condition. For example, there is someone who is invited to follow his teachings, then he can answer "for you your religion for me my religion".

### **Shighat Amtsāl in the Qur'an**

<sup>41</sup> Mardan, 180.

<sup>42</sup> Mardan, 180.

There are several forms of *sighat amtsāl* in the Qur'an which consist of several forms, including the following:

First, *sighat tasybih*, clear sign (*tasybih al-sharib*), namely *sighat* or a clear form of parable in which there are words or expressions of *matsāl* (parable). For example, as in Q.S. Yunus verse 24 as follows: It means "Indeed, the parable of worldly life is like water (rain) that We sent down from the sky." In this verse of the Qur'an it is clear that there is a *matsāl* pronunciation which means a parable.

Second, *sighat covert tashbih* (*tashbih al-dhimni*), namely *sighat* or a form of parable that is veiled or hidden, in which the parable does not contain the word *amtsāl*, but the parable is known in terms of its meaning. For example, al-Hujurah verse 12 which means: "And let not some of you gossip about the others. Does one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? then of course you feel disgusted with him." The verse does not contain the words *matsāl* (parable), but the meaning clearly explains the parable, which is to say that someone backbites another person, which is likened to eating the carcasses of one's own friends.

Third, *sighat majāz mursal*, namely *sighat* with a form of parable that is free and not bound by the origin of the story. An example is in verse 73 of Q.S. al-Hajj.

يَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ ضُرْبَ مَثَلٍ فَاَسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَنْ يَخْلُقُوا ذُبَابًا وَلَوْ اجْتَمَعُوا لَهُ وَإِنْ يَسْلُبْهُمُ الذُّبَابُ شَيْئًا لَا يَسْتَنْقِذُوهُ مِنْهُ ضَعُفَ الطَّالِبِ وَالْمَطْلُوبِ

"O people, an example is presented, so listen to it. Indeed, those you invoke besides Allah will never create [as much as] a fly, even if they gathered together for that purpose. And if the fly should steal away from them a [tiny] thing, they could not recover it from him. Weak are the pursuer and pursued"

Fourth, *sighat majāz murakkab*, namely *sighat* in the form of a double parable whose similarities are taken from two related things, where the relation is commonly used in everyday speech which of course comes from the *isti'arah tamtsiliyyah*. For example, seeing someone who is unsure whether to go or not, then say it. "I see you go back and forth." In the Qur'an, for example, as in Q.S. al-Jumu'ah verse 5, which is like a donkey carrying a thick book 'here is the condition of the donkey who cannot use the book properly, even though he is the one carrying the thick book'.

Fifth, *sighat isyti'arah tamtsiliyyah*, namely in the form of parables, this form of lyrics is almost the same as the *murakkab* figure of speech, because it is indeed its origin. For example, before shooting, the arrows must be filled. For example in Q.S. Yunus verse 24, which means "As if it had never grown yesterday".

### **Benefits and Wisdom *Amtsāl* Qur'an**

Based on an in-depth analysis of the contents of the Qur'an, there are verses that show several benefits of *amtsāl* Qur'an, among others, mentioned in Q.S. al-Hasyr verse 21 about people who are asked to think, Q.S. al-Ankabut verse 43 about knowledgeable people who can use reason to analyze it, and Q.S. al-Zumar verse 27 about humans thinks that there are similarities that can be seen in the verse, namely that *amtsāl* is for humans. So it can be seen that there are three functions of the human soul related to *amtsāl*, namely *yatafakkar*, *ya'qil* and *yatazakkar*. This shows that there are certain moments for humans to think. *Amtsāl* terms contained in the Qur'an can be the target of his thoughts. On the one hand, *amtsāl* is the target or material for analysis, while on the other hand, *amtsāl* guides one in remembering.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Jalaluddin Al-Suyuthi, *Al-Itqan Fi Ulum Al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.).

The following describes several narrations and opinions of scholars who explain the virtues of *amtsāl* Qur'an. First, a history narrated by Imam al-Baihaqi from Abu Hurairah as follows:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: "أَعْرَبُوا الْقُرْآنَ، وَاتَّبِعُوا غَرَائِبَهُ وَعَرَائِئَهُ فَرَائِضُهُ وَخُدُودُهُ، فَإِنَّ الْقُرْآنَ نَزَلَ عَلَى خَمْسَةِ أَوْجُهٍ: حَلَالٍ وَحَرَامٍ وَمُحْكَمٍ وَمُتَشَابِهٍ وَأَمْثَالٍ، فَاعْمَلُوا بِالْحَلَالِ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الْحَرَامَ وَاتَّبِعُوا الْمُحْكَمَ وَآمِنُوا بِالْمُتَشَابِهِ وَاعْتَبِرُوا بِالْأَمْثَالِ"

From Abu Hurairah said, "Rasulullah SAW. do it, 'indeed the Qur'an came down with five contents (principal), namely: halal, haram, mukham, mutasyabih, and amtsal. So, do what is lawful, stay away from what is unlawful, follow what is mukham, believe in what is mutasyabih, and take lessons from aritsal (parables)."<sup>44</sup>

Second, the opinion of al-Mawardi (d. 1058) once said that among the sciences of the Qur'an the greatest is the science of *amtsāl*.<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately, many people are negligent with the Qur'an because they are busy with the *amtsāl* and forget about the *al-matsulat* (object of parable). In fact, parables without actors are like horses without reins, or like camels without bridles. More than that, other scholars have stated that Imam al-Shafi'i (d. 820) has considered *amtsāl* as one of the Qur'anic knowledge that must be known by a *mujtabid*.<sup>46</sup> Because, it will further emphasize the necessity to obey Him and stay away from disobedience to Him.

Third, the opinion of 'Izuddin ibn 'Abd al-Salam (d. 1262) that Allah has actually made parables in the Qur'an as reminders and advice (*tadzkiiran wa wa'ziba*).<sup>47</sup> As for parables containing differences in reward, destruction of deeds, praise, reproach or anything of the like, it shows the determination of several legal cases (*ahkam*).

Manna al-Qatthan (d. 1999) explains some of the benefits of *amtsāl* Qur'an which are intended to make it easier to use,<sup>48</sup> namely among others as follows:

First, displaying something *ma'qul* (abstract) into a concrete form, so that it can be felt or easily understood by humans. For example, Allah made an *amtsāl* for the condition of people who use wealth with *riya'* as stated in Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]: 264.

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تُبْطِلُوا صَدَقَاتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْأَذَىٰ كَالَّذِي كَالَّذِي يُنْفِقُ مَالَهُ رِثَاءَ النَّاسِ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَمَثَلُهُ كَمَثَلِ صَفْوَانٍ عَلَيْهِ تُرَابٌ فَأَصَابَهُ وَابِلٌ فَتَرَكَهُ صَلْدًا لَا يَقْدِرُونَ عَلَىٰ شَيْءٍ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ

"O you who have believed, do not invalidate your charities with reminders or injury as does one who spends his wealth [only] to be seen by the people and does not believe in Allah and the Last Day. His example is like that of a [large] smooth stone upon which is dust and is hit by a downpour that leaves it bare. They are unable [to keep] anything of what they have earned. And Allah does not guide the disbelieving people"

It reveals the essence of something that is not visible, as if something is visible or makes something unseen as if it can be directly witnessed. As the expression in Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]: 275.

الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبَا لَا يَقْوَمُونَ إِلَّا كَمَا يَقُومُ الَّذِي يَتَخَبَّطُهُ الشَّيْطَانُ مِنَ الْمَسِّ...

<sup>44</sup> Muhammad ibn Alawi Al-Maliki Al-Hasani and Tarmana Abdul Qosim, *Samudra Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an* (Bandung: Mizan Pustaka, 2003).

<sup>45</sup> Abu Al-Hasan Al-Mawardi, *Adab Ad-Dunya Wa Ad-Din* (Beirut: Dar al-Kotob al-Ilmiyah, 2005).

<sup>46</sup> Al-Suyuthi, *Al-Itqan Fi Ulum Al-Qur'an*, 386.

<sup>47</sup> Ja'far Subhani, *Al-Amtsal Fi Al-Qur'an Al-Karim* (Maktabah Tauhid, n.d.).

<sup>48</sup> Manna Al-Qatthan, *Mababis Fi Ulum Al-Qur'an* (Kairo: Maktabah Wahbah, 1995).

“Those who consume interest cannot stand [on the Day of Resurrection] except as one stands who is being beaten by Satan into insanity...”

Compile interesting and beautiful meanings in one solid expression, such as the *kaminah amtsāl* and *mursalab amtsāl* which have been mentioned in the verses above.

Second, encourage the person who has been given the *matsāl* to act according to the content of the *matsāl*, if it is something the soul likes. As in Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]: 261.

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلٍ فِي كُلِّ سُنْبُلَةٍ مِائَةُ حَبَّةٍ وَاللَّهُ يُضَعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

“The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing”

The wisdom from the *uslub* concept of parables/parables as outlined by Allah in His book is as follows:

First, by using parables in concrete forms, listeners and readers of the Qur'an will feel as if the message conveyed by the Qur'an is seen directly. Therefore, the meaning of the *amtsāl* in the Qur'an can encourage the soul to accept the intended meaning and make the mind feel satisfied with it.

Second, *amtsāl* Qur'an contains an *'ibrah* or lesson that can lead humans to the perfection of their humanity. So, therefore whoever thinks of the parable that Allah has mentioned in His book, then indeed he has become a pious person, as Allah says in Q.S. al-Hashr [59]: 21.

لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى جَبَلٍ لَرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا مُتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَلُ نُضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“If We had sent down this Qur'an upon a mountain, you would have seen it humbled and coming apart from fear of Allah. And these examples We present to the people that perhaps they will give thought”

Third, living in this world is a choice and Allah has made a kind of parable with the concept of *amtsāl* to show us the best choice, that how much loss it will be for those who follow their desires to deny their orders and prohibitions. Like the life that has been experienced by previous peoples, both in relation to good and bad qualities, intended as a reflection for human life in general, especially Muslims, should read, live and adapt its symbolic content, as a very important lesson. Valuable to human beings *kaffah bi makarim al-akblaq*.

The characteristics of the *amtsāl* which specifically and in detail have not been found in the books of the *Ulumul Qur'an*. However, from some of the existing information, the writer can formulate some of the characteristics of the *amtsāl*. First, that the amphitheater contains an explanation of meaning that is still vague or abstract so that it becomes clear, concrete and memorable. Second, the *amtsāl* has parallels between the situations in which the parable is meant and its equivalent. Third, there is a balance (*tawazun*) between parables and analogous situations.

## Conclusion

Based on the description above, several conclusions can be drawn. First, the term *amtsāl* of the Qur'an is a parable or expression with a beautiful style set by Allah through the Qur'an in the form of a short, clear, and concise expression to serve as a good role model in order to increase faith in Allah. Second, there are four kinds of *amtsāl*, namely *amtsāl qissab*, *amtsāl lil bal*, *amtsāl al-wasfi* and *amtsāl al-i'tibar*. While in understanding *amtsāl* there are three, namely *amtsāl musarrabah*, *amtsāl kaminah*, and *amtsāl mursalab*. Third, the term *amtsāl* of the Qur'an shows several benefits to facilitate its use, namely showing something that is *ma'qul* into a concrete form, so that it can be felt or easily

understood by humans, revealing essences and suggesting something that is not appearing as if it becomes visible, or making the unseen as if it can be witnessed immediately, also provides motivation for things that are liked.

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