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SUPPORTING AND CONTRADICTING VIEWS OF THOUGHTS ON *ISRĀ'ĪLIYYĀT*

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze both supporting and opposing scholarly perspectives on the use of *Israiliyyat* in Qur'anic interpretation. Utilizing a qualitative library research method, the study explores the historical and textual foundations underlying the inclusion of *Israiliyyat* narratives. Findings indicate that the use of *Israiliyyat* in *tafsir* has historical legitimacy, supported by references such as Surah Yûnus verse 94 and several hadiths that permit the narration of stories from the Children of Israel. However, this permissibility is conditional and must be approached with caution. Scholars categorize *Israiliyyat* into three types: those that align with Islamic teachings, those that contradict them, and those that are neutral. A critical and discerning approach is essential to maintain the authenticity of interpretation and protect the integrity of Islamic faith. When used responsibly, *Israiliyyat* can enhance the historical depth of interpretation, as seen in the works of classical *mufassirs* like Ibn Jarir al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr. Nevertheless, *Israiliyyat* should not be considered a source of law or creed but rather as supplementary material offering contextual insight. The study concludes that the appropriate use of *Israiliyyat* requires a balance between intellectual openness and theological vigilance, enabling a nuanced and faithful understanding of its role in Islamic exegesis.

Keywords: *Israiliyyat*; *Tafsir*; *Hadith*; *Ulama*; Controversy

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INTRODUCTION

Interpreting the Qur'an is one of the critical endeavors that scholars have undertaken since the time of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to the present day. In the process of interpretation, various methods and approaches are used to understand the meaning of the verses, which are often multi-dimensional and complex. One method that is quite controversial but widely used is the use of *Israiliyyat* narrations, namely stories and information originating from the traditions of the People of the Book, such as Jews and Christians (Hermawati & Zuhriyah, 2025). The use of *Israiliyyat* is often debated among scholars; some allow it on the grounds of its benefits and the existence of supporting evidence, while others forbid it because they are worried that it contains elements that contradict Islamic law (Munirah, 2017).

Israiliyyat originates from the root word "Isra'il," which refers to the Israelites or Bani Israil, specifically the descendants of the Prophet Ya'qub bin Ishaq bin Ibrahim (AS). In terms of terminology, *Israiliyyat* refers to narrations originating from the books of the Torah and the Gospel, as well as oral traditions from the people of the Book, such as Jews and Christians. The stories of previous prophets and people, which are also mentioned in the Qur'an, have counterparts in other holy books, so the *Israiliyyat* history is often used as additional material to provide a more complete picture in interpretation. However, the *ulama* emphasized the importance of being careful and selective in using this history so as not to receive incorrect or contrary information to the principles of the Islamic faith. The use of *Israiliyyat* is permitted as long as it is by Islamic law; conversely, it must be rejected if it conflicts with the law (Rusydi, 2011).

The main argument often used by groups that allow the use of *Israiliyyat* is found in QS Yûnus verse 94, which explicitly instructed the Prophet Muhammad SAW to ask "those who read the book before you" if there were any doubts. This verse shows that Allah SWT allowed the Prophet Muhammad SAW to ask questions from the People of the Book in order to eliminate doubts about the revelation he received, thus opening up space for the use of sources outside the Qur'an originating from the *Ahlu al-Kitab*, especially in clarifying the context of historical and narrative verses. Thus, the use of *Israiliyyat* is not forbidden but is permitted within certain limits as long as it does not conflict with the principles of Islamic faith and sharia. Some commentators also accept this approach as a means to

enrich the understanding of interpretation while maintaining selectivity and caution in accepting the historical context (Al-Fath, 2012).

The hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) emphasize the importance of conveying the history of the Children of Israel, provided it is accurate and does not contradict the Islamic faith. In one of the authentic hadiths narrated by Imam Bukhari, the Prophet said: "Convey from me even one verse, and tell the history of the Children of Israel, it is okay. And whoever lies in my name intentionally, then be prepared to occupy his seat in Hell." (Munirah, 2017). This hadith serves as proof that Muslims are permitted to utilize the *Israiliyyat* history to enhance their understanding of the Qur'an, provided that they exercise caution to avoid causing misunderstandings and misguidance. The strict prohibition against lying in the name of the Prophet also reminds us that caution must be maintained in conveying this history.

Classical commentators such as Ibn Jarir Ath-Thabari and Ibn Katsir explicitly discussed *Israiliyyat* in their *tafsir*. They acknowledge the existence of this history as additional material that can be used to interpret verses related to the stories of previous prophets and people (Yati, 2015). However, both also emphasized that the *Israiliyyat* narrations must be strictly selected, using only narrations that conform to Islamic principles and rejecting those that contradict them. This approach reflects a moderate attitude that recognizes the benefits of *Israiliyyat* while maintaining the purity of Islamic teachings.

In the development of modern interpretation, scholars, and interpreters of the Qur'an increasingly consider the historical and contextual aspects that can be obtained from the *Israiliyyat* narrations. These narrations play a crucial role in bridging the knowledge gap between the *Qur'anic* narrative and the understanding of people who lack direct access to history. By utilizing the *Israiliyyat* appropriately and selectively, the interpretation of the Qur'an becomes richer and provides a deeper understanding of the divine messages contained therein. This moderate and critical attitude towards the *Israiliyyat* allows modern interpreters to integrate these sources without sacrificing the principles of faith and strict interpretation methodology (Khusnah & Noorhidayati, 2024).

The use of *Israiliyyat* in the interpretation of the Koran cannot be separated from quite strong criticism and rejection from some scholars. They oppose the use of the *Israiliyyat* history because they are worried about fake history, beliefs that conflict with Islam, and potential deviations from the faith. These scholars reminded Muslims to adhere

to the authenticity of the Qur'an and *Sunnah* as the primary sources and to avoid excessive dependence on external sources whose authenticity cannot be ascertained. This rejection was also based on concerns that the non-selective inclusion of *Israiliyyat* could compromise the purity of the interpretation and lead to a misunderstanding of the original meaning of the Qur'an verses. Therefore, *Israiliyyat* must be placed in a proportional and balanced position in the study of *tafsir*, with a critical and selective attitude so as not to cause distortions to the creed and understanding of Islam (Frianda, 2022).

In essence, the ability to interpret the Qur'an using the *Israiliyyat* history is a phenomenon that has a strong rational basis but must also be accompanied by a critical and selective attitude. This approach opens up space for enriching knowledge and understanding of the Islamic holy book while also reminding us of the importance of maintaining the authenticity and purity of its teachings. Therefore, a discussion of *Israiliyyat* in the context of interpreting the Qur'an is crucial for supporting a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the religion.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative method with a library research approach, aiming to examine in depth the views that support and contradict the use of *Israiliyyat* in the interpretation of the Qur'an (Sugiyono, 2017). Data were obtained from various written sources, including classical and modern tafsir books, journal articles, books, and scientific works that comprehensively discuss *Israiliyyat*. This approach enables researchers to systematically and critically collect, identify, and analyze various opinions of scholars and interpreters regarding *Israiliyyat*.

In the analysis process, this research examines the Islamic propositions, hadith, and arguments of the *ulama*, which serve as the basis for supporting and rejecting *Israiliyyat*. The researchers also compare the interpretation method that uses *Israiliyyat* with a more textual and contextual approach to interpretation, such as that used by Ibnu Katsir and other modern commentators. The analysis was conducted to understand the proportionate placement of Israiliyyat in the study of *tafsir* and how a selective attitude towards this history is applied to maintain the purity of the creed and the validity of the Qur'an's interpretation.

In addition, researchers use content analysis techniques to examine the content of *Israiliyyat* history contained in *tafsir* books and related literature (Creswell, 2015). Thus, this research not only describes the position of *Israiliyyat* in the tafsir tradition but also assesses the theological and methodological implications of its use. The research results will provide a scientific contribution to understanding the dynamics of the *Israiliyyat* debate and offer recommendations for a balanced and critical approach to its use in the study of Qur'an interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Basic Concept of *Isrāīliyyāt* in the Interpretation of the Qur'an

Etymologically, the term Isrāīliyyāt is the plural form of the word Isrāīliyyah, which is the form of nisbat (attribution) to the word Isrāīl. The word Isrāīl itself comes from Hebrew and consists of two syllables: "Isra," which means "servant," and "Il," which means "God"(Syahbah, 2016). Thus, *Isrāīl* means "servant of Allah." This name is a nickname for the Prophet Ya'qūb bin Isḥāq bin Ibrāhīm, who was the ancestor of the descendants who later became known as Banī Isrāīl. In the Qur'an, the term Isrāīl refers directly to the Prophet Ya'qūb, as stated in QS. Āli 'Imrān verse 93 explains the foods that Isrāīl forbade himself before the Torah was revealed (Sukardi, 2022). It is as QS. Ali Imran verse 93 is as follows: All food is lawful for the Children of Israel, except for food that Israel (Ya'qub) made forbidden to him before the Torah was revealed. Say (Prophet Muhammad), "Bring the Torah and recite it, if you are truthful." (Kemenag RI, 2016).

From the descendants of Prophet Ya'qub consisting of twelve children, a group known as *Banī Isrāīl* was born, which historically developed into various tribes (*Al-Asbāṭ*). The children of Prophet Ya'qub became the ancestors of the tribes of *Banī Isrāīl*, who later played an important role in the history of prophecy. Among these descendants are important figures such as Prophet Musa, Harun, Ilyas, Ilyasā', Dawūd, Sulaimān, Zakariyyā, Yaḥyā, and 'Īsā AS. In addition, the term "Jew" emerged as a group identity originating from the tribe of *Yahūdẓā* (Yahuda), one of the sons of Prophet Ya'qub whose descendants were the most numerous and influential in the history of the nation (Finkelstein & Silberman, 2001).

In terminology, *Isrāīliyyāt* refers to stories or narrations that originate from Jewish and Christian religious traditions and literature, such as the Taurat, the Gospel, the Talmud, and other holy books, which later entered the treasury of Islamic interpretation and hadith. Scholars such as Sayyid Ahmad Kholīl and Muhammad Husain al-Dhahabī explained that *Isrāīliyyāt* was initially limited to stories from Jewish circles, but in its development, also included stories from Christian traditions and even from other outside groups, including the enemies of Islam, who infiltrated their stories into Islamic teachings. Exegetes often use these stories to complement the interpretation of verses in the Qur'an that contain narratives about previous peoples. However, their use must still be filtered to avoid conflict with the principles of Islamic law. This approach shows that *Isrāīliyyāt* is a narrative originating from the People of the Book, which entered the Islamic interpretation tradition through social and cultural interactions between Muslims and Jewish and Christian communities in the Arabian Peninsula (Akhmad & Suhandi, 2020).

Tafsir and hadith scholars then provide a broader definition of *Isrāīliyyāt*. In their view, *Isrāīliyyāt* includes all forms of stories, beliefs, or fairy tales originating from outside Islam and inserted into the interpretation of the Qur'an and hadith (Tammulis & Arsyad, 2022). Interpreters or narrators sometimes included these stories to clarify the context of the Qur'an, provide a specific historical background, or use them as a form of analogy. It happened mainly in the early days of Islam when some former Jews and Christians converted to Islam and brought with them stories from their old traditions.

According to Muhammad ibn Muhammad Abū Syahbah, the attribution of the word *Isrāīliyyāt* originates from the last word in the compound term "Banī Isrāīl," resulting in the nisbat form *Isrāīliyyah* and the plural form *Isrāīliyyāt*. In the context of Islamic scholarship, this term is significant because it relates to the validity of sources in interpreting the verses of the Qur'an. Some exegetes use *Isrāīliyyāt* as complementary material (*al-tabyīn*) in interpreting verses related to the stories of the previous prophets (*qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*). In contrast, others are very critical or even reject the existence of *Isrāīliyyāt* in the interpretation because it is considered to contain stories that are not by Islamic law (Mahmud, 2015).

Scholars classify *Isrāīliyyāt* into three main categories. First, *Isrāīliyyāt* that are justified (*maqbūlah*), namely narrations that are by Islamic law and do not contradict the Qur'an or *Sunnah*. Second, *Isrāīliyyāt* that are rejected (*mardūdah*), namely narrations that contradict

Islamic teachings and contain elements that damage the creed or insult the prophets. Third, *Isrāīliyyāt* whose truth or falsity cannot be ascertained (*maskūt 'anhā*), namely narrations that do not contradict the Qur'an or *Sunnah* but are also not supported by authentic Islamic sources so that they cannot be justified or denied (Akhmad & Suhandi, 2020).

Scholars such as Ibn Kathīr, al-Ṭabarī, and al-Qurṭubī are known to have utilized some of the *Isrāīliyyāt* narrations in their tafsīr works while still adhering to the principles of caution and source criticism. In this case, they quoted them on the condition that they should not contradict the basic principles of Islam, should not be used as a basis for law (*ḥujjah*), and should not be accepted as absolute truth. Thus, *Isrāīliyyāt*, in the interpretation of the Qur'an, is a phenomenon that shows the early interaction of Islam with the traditions of previous books. Caution in its use is essential to prevent confusion between authentic Islamic teachings and stories that are not authentic or that may even damage the understanding of the people towards the Qur'an. Awareness of the origins, types, and limitations of the validity of *Isrāīliyyāt* is crucial in the study of interpretation and the *ulūm* of the Qur'an today.

Views that Support *Isrāīliyyāt*

Those scholars who permit the use of Isra'iliyyat narrations in interpreting the verses of the Qur'an base their opinions on several arguments derived from the Qur'an and authentic hadith. One of the main arguments that is often used as a basis is the word of Allah SWT in QS Yûnus verse 94, which reads: "If you (Muhammad) are in doubt about what We have revealed to you, then ask those who read the book before you. Indeed, the truth has come to you from your Lord, so never be one of those who doubt." (Kemenag RI, 2019) This verse explicitly grants permission to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to ask the People of the Book if he has doubts about the revelation he has received.

The understanding of this verse among scholars who support the permissibility of using *Isra'iliyyat* is that it provides legitimacy for the possibility of utilizing the knowledge and history of the People of the Book. Therefore, narrations originating from them are not automatically rejected but can be used as a reference as long as they do not conflict with the principles of Islamic teachings as outlined in the Qur'an and *Sunnah*. This approach shows a selective and critical attitude in accepting *Isra'iliyyat* as part of an exegetical method that enriches the understanding of sacred texts.

The hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW narrated in *Sahih al-Bukhari* number 4485 states: "Convey from me even if it is only one verse. And take the narrations from the Children of Israel without objection. Whoever lies about me intentionally, then prepare to occupy his place in hell" (HR. Bukhari). This hadith explicitly states that the Prophet SAW permitted his people to narrate stories from the Children of Israel, provided the narration does not contain lies or contradict Islamic beliefs (Yusufpati, 2023).

Ibnu Kathir reinforces this opinion in his *Muqaddimah tafsir*, which states that there is no prohibition on mentioning the stories of the People of the Book as long as they do not conflict with the Al-Qur'an and *Sunnah*. Ibnu Katsir even included the history of *Isra'iliyyat* in his interpretation as an additional insight but still made a critical selection of its truth and conformity with Islamic principles. He commented on and criticized parts of the *Isra'iliyyat* history that were considered weak or inappropriate, thus demonstrating an evaluative attitude in the use of this history (Tammulis & Arsyad, 2022).

Scholars such as Ibnu Jarir ath-Thabari also explained that in QS. Ar-Ra'd would verse 43 contains an acknowledgment of the scientific credibility of the People of the Book. Meaning: Those who disbelieve say, "You (Prophet Muhammad) are not a Messenger." Say, "Allah and those who understand the knowledge of the Book are sufficient as witnesses between me and you."(Kemenag RI, 2016). According to the majority of scholars, including Ibn 'Abbas RA, what is meant by "people who know the Book" are scholars from Jewish and Christian circles who still maintain the Taurat and the Gospel correctly. Thus, their knowledge can still serve as a reference within the limits permitted by *Sharia*.

The history from Abdullah bin Amr RA confirms something that is in line with the hadith narrated by Ahmad, Bukhari, and Tirmidhi, which states that the Prophet Muhammad SAW said: "Convey from me, even if only one verse. Tell what you heard from the Children of Israel because it is not sinful. However, whoever lies in my name intentionally, let him be prepared to occupy a place in Hell" (HR. Bukhari). This hadith explicitly states that narrating stories from the Children of Israel is permissible as long as they do not contain lies or conflict with Islamic beliefs (Mukarromah & Sartika, 2022).

In this context, scholars who accept the narration of *Isra'iliyyat* view the recommendation to convey the story of the Bani Israel as proof of the legitimacy of using this narration in interpretation. They argue that the *Isra'iliyyat* history, to a certain extent,

can enrich the treasury of interpretation and provide contextual explanations for narrative verses of the Qur'an. However, the acceptance of this history remains selective, with attention paid to its suitability and validity by Islamic principles (Mubarak, 2019).

Ahmad Dimyati Badruzzaman, in his work "Stories of *Israiliyyat* in *Tafsir Munir*," states that several verses in the Qur'an explicitly demonstrate the ability to refer back to previous books in order to establish the law. It strengthens the argument that Muslims are not prohibited from taking stories or information from these sources as long as they remain within the control corridor of Islamic creed principles. Thus, the view of scholars who allow the absolute use of *Israiliyyat* in interpretation is based on strong textual evidence, both from the Qur'an and hadith. However, the acceptance of *Israiliyyat* history must be done selectively and critically so as not to result in the legitimization of narratives that conflict with Islamic teachings (Badruzzaman, 2005). This approach demonstrates that *Israiliyyat* can be a complementary source in the interpretation of the Qur'an, particularly in providing a broader narrative context, as long as it continues to prioritize the principles of verification and conformity with Islamic law. Therefore, a critical and selective attitude is the primary key to utilizing *Israiliyyat*, ensuring that it does not distort meaning or deviation from faith (Alfiah, 2010).

The Contradictory Views of the *Isrāīliyyāt*

In Islamic studies, both classical and contemporary, a group of scholars argues that the narration of *Israiliyyat*—namely, stories originating from Jewish and Christian traditions that are included in Islamic interpretation and historical literature—should be rejected. This rejection is not selective but rather comprehensive, encompassing stories that are considered valid, doubtful, or contradictory to Islamic teachings. The primary reason for this rejection is the significant potential of *Israiliyyat* to compromise the purity of faith, raise doubts about the nature of prophecy, and introduce myths and fictional stories that can obscure Muslims' understanding of the pure teachings (Firdaus & Kholid, 2024).

This rejection of the *Israiliyyat* narrative has a strong basis in the Qur'an and the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. One of the verses often cited as a reference is the word of Allah in QS. al-Kahf verse 22, which means: "Therefore, do not dispute about them (*Ashabul Kahf*), except for external disputes and do not ask about them to any of them." (Kementerian Agama RI, 2013) This verse explicitly forbids the Prophet

Muhammad (SAW) from seeking further information from the People of the Book regarding the story of *Ashabul Kahf*. Companions such as Ibn Abbas and Qatadah interpreted this prohibition as a warning not to dig up details of the stories of previous people from outside sources because Allah has provided sufficient knowledge through the revelation of the Qur'an.

Next is QS. al-Hujurat verse 6, which contains the principle of caution against information whose source is unclear, namely "O you who believe, if a wicked person comes to you with news, then scrutinize it..." (Al Mahali & As Suyuthi, 2014). If news from a wicked person must be verified, then even more so, news from the People of the Book, who are said in many verses of the Qur'an to have falsified their holy book. Therefore, any information from them, including historical or religious stories, must be rejected to avoid distortion.

Allah says in QS. Al-Baqarah verse 78, which means: "Among them (Jews) are illiterate, who do not know the Book, except for false tales, and they only speculate." (Kementerian Agama RI, 2013). This verse illustrates that most of the People in the Book are only familiar with false stories that are passed down from generation to generation without being accompanied by actual knowledge or a valid chain of transmission. Therefore, using these stories as references in interpretation, Islamic history, or aqidah can pose a significant risk to the purity of Islamic teachings (Mawardi, 2022).

The word of Allah in QS. Al-Baqarah verse 79 states: "So woe to those who write the Book with their own hands and then say: 'This is from Allah', in order to gain a little profit. So woe to them for what their own hands have written, and woe to them for what they have earned." (Kemenag RI, 2011). This verse serves as the primary basis for scholars who prohibit the narration of *Israiliyyat* as Allah firmly condemns the act of falsifying revelations carried out by some of the People of the Book. Thus, if the source of information has been contaminated by distortion and manipulation from the outset, then it is not appropriate to use it as additional material in interpreting Islamic revelation. This approach aims to preserve the purity and authenticity of Islamic teachings from influences that could compromise the integrity of the holy text.

Apart from the verses of the Qur'an, the prohibition on transmitting Israeliyat is also confirmed through the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. One of the authentic hadiths narrated by Imam Bukhari states: "Do not confirm the People of the Book nor

deny them. But say: We believe in Allah and in what has been revealed to us." (HR. Bukhari, no. 4485). This hadith teaches caution in receiving information from the People of the Book. The Prophet Muhammad did not order confirmation absolutely due to the possibility of falsification in the news but also did not order denial of everything, as some of the information might be true. Therefore, the most appropriate attitude is to avoid using *Israiliyyat* narrations in Islamic studies unless the narration is supported by valid *Qur'anic* evidence or authentic hadith. This approach aims to maintain the integrity and purity of Islamic teachings from the influence of irresponsible narratives.

Ibnu Abbas RA, one of the most expert friends in the field of interpretation, showed a firm attitude towards the narration of *Israiliyyat*. In a history contained in the book al-*Mustadrak* by al-Hakim, he said: "O Muslims, why do you ask the People of the Book when you have the newer Book of Allah (the Qur'an)? Allah has informed you that they have written the book with their own hands, changing and altering it, and then they say, 'This is from Allah.' This statement is the main argument for the group of *ulama* who reject *Israiliyyat* as a whole. They argue that understanding Islamic teachings is sufficient to base oneself on the Al-Qur'an and authentic hadith without the need to open up space for information from outside sources, which has the potential to cause confusion, heresy, and even misguidance. This approach emphasizes the importance of maintaining the purity and authenticity of Islamic teachings from the influence of narratives that cannot be justified scientifically and textually (Albayrak, 2000).

Thus, the view that prohibits the transmission of *Israiliyyat* is based on the principles of caution (*iḥtiyāṭ*), loyalty to the purity of revelation (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), and a critical attitude towards inauthentic external sources (*naqd al-maṣādir al-ajnabiyyah*). This approach invites Muslims to rely on guidance from the Qur'an and the authentic *Sunnah* as the primary source while simultaneously closing the door to stories whose *chain of transmission (sanad*) and truth cannot be verified. This attitude aims to preserve the purity of the faith and prevent people from disseminating incorrect or contrary information that contradicts Islamic principles.

CONCLUSION

The use of *Israiliyyat* history in interpreting the Qur'an has a strong historical and textual basis, both in the Qur'an and in the hadith—propositions such as QS. Yûnus verse

94 and the hadiths, which permit narrating stories from the Children of Israel, demonstrate that there is room in Islam to utilize this history, especially in explaining the stories of previous people, which are not detailed in the Qur'an. However, this ability is limited and must be accompanied by a strict adherence to the precautionary principle. The *ulama* emphasizes the importance of selecting *Israiliyyat* into three categories, namely those that are by the *Shari'a* and are acceptable, those that are contrary to the *Shari'a* and must be rejected, and those whose truth is unknown and neutral. This critical and selective attitude is necessary so that the interpretation of the Qur'an remains within the bounds of truth and avoids elements that can harm the faith. If used responsibly and scientifically, *Israeli* history can enrich the treasury of interpretation, especially in the historical aspects and background of the stories of the prophets, as was done by classical commentators such as Ibn Jarir Ath-Thabari and Ibn Kathir,, who incorporated *Isra*eli history into their works while still maintaining clear boundaries. Thus, *Israiliyyat* is not positioned as a source of law or creed but rather as additional information that provides historical nuances in the understanding of verses. Therefore, the permissibility of interpreting the Qur'an with *Israiliyyat* does not mean confirming the entire history of the *Ahlu al-Kitab* but rather placing it as complementary material that can be considered scientifically and wisely. The balance between intellectual openness and firmness of faith is the key to responding to *Israiliyyat* in the science of interpretation, enabling Muslims to understand the position and role of *Israiliyyat* correctly, avoid mistakes, and simultaneously open themselves to the potential benefits of the knowledge contained therein.

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