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THE NUTRITIONAL CONTENT AND MEDICINAL PROPERTIES OF MANNA AND SALWA IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF QUR'ANIC MEDICAL I'JĀZ: A STUDY OF DR. SAYYID AL-JUMAILĪ'S WORK

Riska Ramadani Salsabila
Ma'had Aly Walindo Pekalongan
achaaaaa2110@gmail.com

Abstract

The Qur'an immortalizes the story of manna and salwa as divine sustenance from the heavens granted to the Children of Israel, carrying both spiritual value and health benefits. This study aims to examine the nutritional content and medicinal properties of these two types of food from the perspective of i'jāz ṭibbī (Qur'anic medical inimitability), referring to the thoughts of Dr. Sayyid Jumaili in his scientific Qur'anic exegesis. The study is conducted using a descriptive-qualitative method through a thematic tafsir approach and a review of medical literature. The findings indicate that manna, a sweet resin from certain plants, contains mannitol and other compounds with calming and anti-inflammatory properties. Meanwhile, salwa, identified as quail, is rich in animal protein, easily absorbed by the body, and supports physical endurance. According to Dr. Jumaili, the mention of these foods in the Qur'an reflects the perfection of divine provision aligned with human biological needs. This study emphasizes the importance of integrating divine revelation with health sciences and reinforces the relevance of i'jāz ṭibbī in interpreting the scientific dimension of Qur'anic verses.

Keywords*: Manna, Salwa, I'jāz ṭibbī, Qur'anic Nutrition*

A. Introduction

The Qur'an was revealed not only as a spiritual and moral guide but also contains various scientific indications related to human life, including health and nutrition. One of the most intriguing narratives in the Qur'an is the story of two types of food bestowed upon the Children of Israel: manna and salwa. These foods are mentioned in several Qur'anic verses, such as Surah al-Baqarah: 57 and al-A'rāf: 160, as divine provisions granted during their time in the desert of Tih.

In Surah al-Baqarah: 61, the Children of Israel asked Prophet Musa for food grown from the earth, such as cucumbers, garlic, lentils, and onions. This request was met with rebuke from Musa, as they were choosing foods of lesser value over those given directly by Allah manna and salwa. This attitude reflects the human tendency to be ungrateful for both spiritual and biological blessings that have been provided in a perfect form.

One field that discusses the scientific dimensions of the Qur'an is *i'jāz ṭibbī*, or medical inimitability in divine revelation. Dr. Sayyid Jumaili, a prominent figure in this field, explains

that manna contains mannitol and other natural compounds with anti-inflammatory and tissue-calming effects. Meanwhile, salwa, identified as quail, contains high-quality animal protein and other nutrients highly beneficial for metabolism and immune function.[1]

Contemporary scientific findings support these claims. Mannitol is used in medicine as an osmotic agent that helps reduce intracranial and intraocular pressure.[2] Quail meat is known to contain essential amino acids, iron, and B vitamins, making it a functional source of animal protein beneficial for health.[3]

Thus, the story of manna and salwa is not merely a historical account or spiritual symbol but also reflects the harmony between divine guidance and human biological needs. This study aims to examine the nutritional content and medicinal benefits of manna and salwa based on the *i'jāz ṭibbī* approach, with a focus on the thoughts of Dr. Sayyid Jumaili as a central figure in scientific interpretation of the Qur'anic text.

B. Methods

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method, relying primarily on literature study as the main foundation. This method was chosen because the research object focuses on the Qur'anic text, tafsir works, and scientific literature in medicine and nutrition, all of which are analyzed in depth to reveal the meanings and interrelationships between concepts.

The primary sources of this research include Qur'anic verses that discuss manna and salwa, as well as the book *I'jāz Ṭibbī fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* by Dr. Sayyid Jumaili, which serves as the main reference for understanding the scientific aspects of Qur'anic medical inimitability. To enrich the analysis, secondary sources were also used, including tafsir works such as *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, *al-Qurṭubī*, and *al-Sa'dī*, as well as articles from medical journals discussing the benefits of mannitol and the nutritional value of quail.

[1] Sayyid Jumaili, I'jāz Ṭibbī fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2003, hlm. 112–115.
[2] George J. Armao & Mark R. Gehring, "Mannitol: Uses and Mechanisms of Action," Journal of Clinical Pharmacy and Therapeutics, Vol. 38, No. 5, 2013, hlm. 417–423.
[3] Yakubu A. et al., "Nutritional Composition and Health Benefits of Quail Meat," African Journal of Food, Agriculture, Nutrition and Development, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2018, hlm. 13784–13795.

The data were analyzed using thematic and content analysis approaches by tracing the correlation between divine narratives and modern scientific evidence. The analytical process was directed to explore the integration of spiritual and medical meanings contained within the concept of *manna wa salwa*, as explained by Dr. Jumaili, thereby producing a holistic understanding within the framework of *i'jāz ṭibbī*.

C. Conclusion (Times New Romans 12 pt bold)

- **Manna and Salwa in the Perspective of the Qur'an**

The Qur'an describes *manna* and *salwa* as extraordinary blessings granted by Allah to the Children of Israel during their time of hardship in the desert of Tih. These types of food were not obtained through human effort, but directly bestowed by God as provisions from the heavens. In Surah al-Baqarah: 57:

وَظَلَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْغَمَامَ وَاَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّ وَالسَّلْوٰىۗ كُلُوْا مِنْ طَيِّبٰتِ مَا رَزَقْنٰكُمْۗ وَمَا ظَلَمُوْنَا وَلٰكِنْ كَانُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُوْنَ

"We shaded you with clouds and sent down to you manna and salwa. Eat from the good things We have provided for you. They did not wrong Us, but they wronged themselves." (QS. al-Baqarah: 57)

Allah states that He shaded them with clouds and sent down manna and salwa, then commanded them to enjoy this pure provision without transgression.

Exegetes explain that *manna* is a sweet substance resembling dew, usually found on leaves or stones in the morning.[4] Linguistically, the word *al-mann* refers to a great gift that descends from the heavens.[5] *Salwa*, on the other hand, is interpreted as a small bird known as quail, which has tender meat, is easily digested, and is high in protein content.[6]

However, in Surah al-Baqarah: 61, the Children of Israel expressed dissatisfaction with that food and requested earthly produce such as cucumbers and onions:

وَاِذْ قُلْتُمْ يٰمُوْسٰى لَنْ نَّصْبِرَ عَلٰى طَعَامٍ وَّاحِدٍ فَادْعُ لَنَا رَبَّكَ يُخْرِجْ لَنَا مِمَّا تُنْۢبِتُ الْاَرْضُ مِنْۢ بَقْلِهَا وَقِثَّاۤىِٕهَا وَفُوْمِهَا وَعَدَسِهَا وَبَصَلِهَاۗ قَالَ اَتَسْتَبْدِلُوْنَ الَّذِيْ هُوَ اَدْنٰى بِالَّذِيْ هُوَ خَيْرٌۗ اِهْبِطُوْا مِصْرًا فَاِنَّ لَكُمْ مَّا سَاَلْتُمْۗ وَضُرِبَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ

[4] Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm, Kairo: Dār Ṭayyibah, 1999, Juz 1, hlm. 113.
[5] Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān, Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 2002, hlm. 793.
[6] Al-Sa'dī, Taysīr al-Karīm al-Raḥmān, Riyadh: Dār Ibn al-Jauzi, 2005, hlm. 53.

الذِّلَّةُ وَالْمَسْكَنَةُ وَبَآءُوْ بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ۗذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا يَكْفُرُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَيَقْتُلُوْنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ ۗذٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَّكَانُوْا يَعْتَدُوْنَ ۝

"(Remember) when you said, 'O Moses, we cannot endure (eating) only one kind of food. So pray to your Lord for us to bring forth for us what the earth grows—its herbs, cucumbers, garlic, lentils, and onions.' He said, 'Would you exchange what is better for what is less? Go down to any settlement, and indeed, you will have what you have asked for.' Then they were struck with humiliation and poverty and earned wrath from Allah. That was because they (repeatedly) disbelieved in Allah's signs and killed the prophets unjustly. That was because they disobeyed and transgressed." (QS. al-Baqarah: 61)

The Israelites conveyed their impatience with the heavenly food and instead requested various vegetables and earthly produce. Musa rebuked them for choosing something inferior over something better. This implies their inclination toward worldly pleasures and inability to be grateful for divine blessings.[7]

Contemporary exegesis interprets "Egypt" in that verse not just as a physical location but as a symbol of worldly lifestyle filled with material indulgence.[8] Conversely, manna and salwa symbolize pure, blessed provision that comes directly from Allah's mercy.

From the perspective of *i'jāz ṭibbī*, these foods are not only spiritually significant but also have medicinal benefits. According to Dr. Sayyid Jumaili, manna contains mannitol, a type of sugar alcohol used in modern medicine to reduce brain and eye pressure.[9] Mannitol is also known for its diuretic and antioxidant properties.[10]

As for *salwa*, or quail, it has high nutritional value and supports healing and cell regeneration. Research shows that quail meat contains essential amino acids, iron, zinc, and B-complex vitamins, making it an ideal animal protein source for maintaining health.[11]

[7] Al-Qurṭubī, al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Juz 1, hlm. 319.
[8] Al-Sya'rāwī, Tafsīr al-Sya'rāwī, Kairo: Akhbār al-Yaum, 1997, hlm. 462.
[9] Sayyid Jumaili, I'jāz Ṭibbī fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2003, hlm. 113-117
[10] Frontiers in Pharmacology, "Mannitol: A Versatile Therapeutic Agent", 2020. https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fphar.2020.585289/full
[11] Journal of Food Science and Technology, "Nutritional Value of Quail Meat: A Comparative Study", 2019. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13197-019-04117-2

Thus, the Qur'an's mention of *manna wa salwa* embodies scientific, ethical, and medical values that deserve further exploration. Besides reflecting Allah's generosity, these foods illustrate a balanced approach to fulfilling both physical and spiritual needs.

- **The Nutritional Content of Manna and Scientific Review**

The Qur'an mentions *manna* as a form of heavenly provision given to the Children of Israel during their time in the desert of Tih, as stated in Surah al-Baqarah: 57. Linguistically, according to al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, the term *al-mann* means a noble gift or divine blessing from the heavens.[12] In classical tafsir literature, *manna* is often identified as a natural sweet substance resembling dew, found on leaves or rocks, and consumable in the morning. Contemporary scientific studies often associate this substance with **mannitol**, a type of sugar alcohol (polyol) that naturally occurs in certain plants like ash trees, olives, and some red algae species.[13]

Mannitol is a white crystalline compound that dissolves easily in water, has a mild sweetness, and contains only 1.6 calories per gram. It is widely used as a low-calorie sweetener.[14] One of its advantages is that it does not cause a significant increase in blood sugar levels and does not damage tooth enamel, making it safe for diabetics and children. Another benefit is its non-fermentable nature in the large intestine, which prevents digestive issues such as bloating or diarrhea common with other sugar alcohols.

Medically, mannitol has long been used as an effective osmotic agent, particularly to reduce intracranial pressure in cases of cerebral edema and to treat high intraocular pressure in glaucoma patients.[15] The World Health Organization (WHO) includes mannitol in its list of essential medicines due to its effectiveness and safety in emergency medical situations.[16] In the pharmaceutical industry, mannitol is often used as an excipient in tablets and capsules because of its chemical stability and moisture-retention properties.[17]

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[12] Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, al-Mufradāt fī Gharīb al-Qur'ān, Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 2002, hlm. 793.

[13] Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Mannitol." https://www.britannica.com/science/mannitol

[14] International Food Information Council, "Low-Calorie Sweeteners." https://foodinsight.org/low-calorie-sweeteners

[15] WHO Model List of Essential Medicines, "Mannitol for Acute Cerebral Edema," 22nd List, 2021.

[16] World Health Organization. "Essential Medicines List." https://www.who.int/medicines/publications/essentialmedicines/en

[17] European Medicines Agency (EMA), "Excipients in the Labelling and Package Leaflet of Medicinal

Several studies have shown that mannitol also has antioxidant and neuroprotective potential. An article in *Frontiers in Pharmacology* notes that mannitol can reduce oxidative stress in brain tissues and protect nerve cells from damage caused by free radicals.[18] In addition to mannitol, manna contains other elements like dextrose, resin, inorganic compounds, and water content that help soothe bodily tissues, reduce inflammation, and maintain digestive moisture, as it lacks tannins that are known to cause irritation.[19]

This explanation aligns with Dr. Sayyid Jumaili's view in *I'jāz Ṭibbī fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, which states that *manna* is not only a spiritual gift but also has therapeutic benefits for human health.[20] He asserts that its characteristics make it suitable for supporting healing and physical recovery due to its mild and absorbable nature. Today, the food and pharmaceutical industries utilize mannitol in products like sugar-free candies, low-glycemic supplements, and safe medical formulations for patients with special health needs.[21]

Therefore, the Qur'anic presentation of *manna* is not only part of a historical account of the Children of Israel, but also contains scientific potential that has only recently been understood in the modern era. Its unique nutritional content and wide-ranging medical benefits are proof that the Qur'anic verses hold high scientific value, representing one form of *i'jāz 'ilmī* (scientific inimitability) in the Holy Book.

- **The Medical and Nutritional Value of Salwa (Quail)**

The Qur'an mentions *salwa* as one of the divine foods sent down to the Children of Israel along with manna, as explained in Surah al-Baqarah: 57 and Surah Ṭāhā: 80. Many scholars interpret *salwa* as the quail a small bird that typically lives in the wild but is easily caught and consumed. This bird is known not only for its delicious taste but also for its remarkable nutritional content and health benefits.

Products for Human Use," 2019.

[18] Frontiers in Pharmacology, "Mannitol: A Versatile Therapeutic Agent," 2020. https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fphar.2020.585289/full

[19] T. S. Lawrence, "Pharmacology of Osmotic Diuretics," Basic & Clinical Pharmacology, 14th ed., McGraw-Hill, 2018.

[20] Sayyid Jumaili, I'jāz Ṭibbī fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2003, hlm. 113–114.

[21] U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), "Mannitol in Foods and Pharmaceuticals." https://www.fda.gov

Nutritionally, quail meat contains a high amount of protein around 25–27 grams per 100 grams of meat with a complete amino acid profile.[22] This makes it an excellent source of animal protein, beneficial for tissue repair, muscle building, and boosting immunity.[23] Quail meat also contains B-complex vitamins (especially B12), iron, zinc, and phosphorus, all of which play crucial roles in energy metabolism, hemoglobin production, and nerve health.[24] Its high vitamin A content also supports vision and immune system function.

From a medical perspective, consuming quail meat has been linked to improved blood quality and anemia prevention, primarily due to its high iron content.[25] In addition, various contemporary studies classify quail meat as a "functional food" because it not only offers essential nutrients but also provides therapeutic functions within the body. One study found that regular consumption of quail meat can help reduce LDL cholesterol and increase HDL, making it beneficial for people with metabolic disorders.[26] Other components such as selenium and antioxidant compounds in this meat are known to neutralize free radicals and reduce the risk of premature aging and cell damage.[27]

According to Dr. Sayyid Jumaili, in his work *I'jāz Ṭibbī fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, the choice of *salwa* by Allah for the Children of Israel has clear medical relevance. He explains that quail meat has a tender texture and is easy to digest, making it ideal for those in recovery or individuals with sensitive digestive systems.[28] This also explains why this bird was chosen as a sign of divine mercy and blessing for people in physically weakened states.

Beyond the meat, quail eggs are also widely recognized in health science for their high protein content and the presence of compounds such as **albumin**, **choline**, and natural antioxidants like **ovomucoid**, which have anti-inflammatory properties.[29] These combined benefits make quail

[22] USDA FoodData Central. "Game bird, quail, meat only, raw." https://fdc.nal.usda.gov/

[23] Arshad, M.S. et al. (2019). "Nutritional Composition and Health Benefits of Quail Meat." International Journal of Food Properties, Vol. 22, No. 1.

[24] Omojola, A.B. et al. (2014). "Proximate Composition and Mineral Contents of Quail Meat." Pakistan Journal of Nutrition, 13(3): 146-150.

[25] Pesti, G.M. (2009). "The Role of Poultry Meat in Human Nutrition." Poultry Science Association.

[26] Ahmad, S. et al. (2017). "Functional Properties of Quail Meat." International Journal of Food Sciences and Nutrition, Vol. 68, No. 2.

[27] Zhang, X. et al. (2018). "Selenium Bioavailability in Game Birds." Journal of Trace Elements in Medicine and Biology, Vol. 50, pp. 453–458.

[28] Sayyid Jumaili, I'jāz Ṭibbī fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2003, hlm. 117–118.

[29] Anwar, F., & Latif, S. (2016). "Nutritional and Functional Properties of Quail Egg." Food Chemistry, Vol. 213, pp. 299–304.

not only historically significant in the Qur'an but also scientifically proven to have nutritional and therapeutic value. This harmony is a testament to the *iʻjāz ʻilmī* (scientific miracle) embedded within divine revelation, which implicitly contains guidance about the biological and medical advantages of divinely chosen foods.

D. Conclusion

The Qur'anic presentation of *manna* and *salwa* is not merely a historical account of previous nations but also contains scientific guidance relevant to health and nutrition. From the perspective of *iʻjāz ṭibbī*, as emphasized by Dr. Sayyid Jumaili, *manna* contains natural sweet compounds such as mannitol, which possess physiological benefits, including anti-inflammatory effects and natural support for the body's metabolic functions. Meanwhile, *salwa*, identified as quail, is high in protein, rich in micronutrients, and proven to support immune function and tissue repair.

Modern research in medicine and nutrition reinforces the fact that these two foods are not only valuable for consumption but also offer significant therapeutic benefits. This indicates that the scientific content in the Qur'an aligns with contemporary scientific findings. Thus, the study of *manna* and *salwa* not only deepens spiritual reflections on Qur'anic verses but also opens opportunities for developing an integrative framework between Islamic knowledge and modern science.

As a result, reflection upon these contents proves that divine revelation brings practical values beneficial to human health and can serve as a foundation for the development of more comprehensive and holistic scientific knowledge.

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