

I'jaz Tibbi in Embryonic Anatomy: An Analytical Study of the Terminology of Shulbi and Tara'ib in QS. Ath-Thariq: 5-7 and QS. Al- A'raf: 172

Putri Ayu Aisyah ¹, Faisal Abdullah ²

¹ Ma'had Aly Walindo Pekalongan, ² Ma'had Aly Walindo Pekalongan

ayysssyy@gmail.com, faisalwalindo@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examines the phenomenon of i'jaz tibbi (medical miraculousness) in QS. Al-A'raf: 172 and QS. Ath-Thariq: 5-7 regarding human embryonic and fetal anatomy. The primary focus of the study lies in the terminology of as-shulbi (the backbone) and at-tara'ib (the breastbone/ribs) and their relevance to modern embryological findings. The research method utilizes a literature review with a scientific exegesis (tafsir ilmi) approach to align the revealed text with contemporary medical facts. The results reveal that during the embryonic phase, the reproductive organs (testes and ovaries) initially develop in the area near the kidneys, which is anatomically situated between the spinal column and the 11th and 12th ribs. Although these organs migrate to their natural positions as the fetus grows, their origin remains traceable through the nerve supply and blood vessels, which continue to originate from the initial point of development. From a neurological perspective, the spinal region is also proven to be the center of the autonomic nervous system that controls human reproductive functions. The use of the terms shulbi and tara'ib in the Qur'an not only possesses precise anatomical accuracy but also contains linguistic beauty (majaz mursal) that represents male vitality and the female emotional aspect.

Keywords: I'jaz Tibbi, Al-Qur'an, Shulbi, Tara'ib, Embryology, Fetal Anatomy.

ملخص البحث

تتناول هذه الدراسة ظاهرة الإعجاز الطبي في قوله تعالى من سورة الأعراف: 172 وسورة الطارق: 5-7، فيما يتعلق بتشريح الجنين الإنساني وتكوينه. وتركز الدراسة بشكل رئيس على مصطلحي الصُّلب والتَّرايب ومدى ارتباطهما بالاكشافات الحديثة في علم الأجنة. اعتمدت الدراسة على المنهج المكتبي من خلال مراجعة الأدبيات، مع توظيف منهج التفسير العلمي (التفسير العلمي) لمواءمة النص القرآني مع الحقائق الطبية المعاصرة. وتُظهر نتائج الدراسة أن الأعضاء التناسلية (كالخصيتين والمبيضين) في المرحلة الجنينية الأولى تتكون بالقرب من الكليتين، وهي منطقة تقع تشريحياً بين العمود الفقري والضلعين الحادي عشر والثاني عشر. وعلى الرغم من انتقال هذه الأعضاء إلى مواضعها الطبيعية مع نمو الجنين، فإن أصلها يظل قابلاً للتتبع من خلال الإمدادات العصبية والأوعية الدموية التي تبقى مرتبطة بمكان نشأتها الأولى. ومن الناحية العصبية، تبيّن أن منطقة العمود الفقري تمثل مركزاً مهماً للجهاز العصبي الذاتي الذي يتحكم في الوظائف التناسلية لدى الإنسان. كما أن استخدام مصطلحي الصُّلب والتَّرايب في القرآن الكريم لا يقتصر على الدقة التشريحية فحسب، بل يتضمن أيضاً جمالاً بلاغياً من قبيل المجاز المرسل، حيث يعبر الصُّلب عن القوة الذكورية، بينما تشير التَّرايب إلى البعد العاطفي الأنثوي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإعجاز الطبي، القرآن الكريم، الصُّلب، التَّرايب، علم الأجنة، تشريح الجنين.

A. Introduction

Muslims fully understand the Al-Qur'an as a divine revelation from Allah SWT. This holy book possesses eternal relevance, and it is believed to consistently provide solutions to the dynamic challenges of every era, extending into the far future.¹

Islam mandates its followers to continuously seek and advance knowledge. As the secrets of nature are unveiled and times change, human insight evolves accordingly. The Al-Qur'an itself is universal and timeless; it contains many mysteries that may remain unsolved today but are gradually being revealed alongside the progress of civilization.²

Implicitly, Allah SWT has signaled that the Al-Qur'an is the fundamental foundation of all knowledge. It serves as a cornerstone for exploring the field of medicine and fostering technological innovations for the future.³ One specific scientific field discussed within it is the anatomy of embryonic or fetal development.

Among various studies on the process of human creation, there is one part considered vital according to the Qur'an and Hadith, known as the coccyx (tailbone) or *sulbi*. It is often referred to as the origin of human existence. Beyond being the first part to be created, this bone serves as the foundation from which humans will be resurrected on the Day of Judgment, possessing the miraculous quality of never decaying or being destroyed by the earth.⁴

Modern medical findings are surprisingly aligned with the hadiths of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) delivered 1.400 years ago. The synchronization between these scientific secrets and divine revelation serves as authentic evidence of the power of Allah SWT, considering that such profound knowledge would have been impossible to attain in the past without divine guidance, even with the support of today's advanced technology and human cognitive abilities.⁵

¹ Samsul Munir Amin, *The Miracles of the Qur'an on Archaeology*, (Wonosobo: LP3M UNSIQ, 2011), 13.

² Azhar, *Humans and Science in the Perspective of the Qur'an*, *Lantanida Journal*, (Vol. 4, No. 1, 2016),

72.

³ Ridwan Abdullah Sani, *Science in the Qur'an*, (Jakarta: Bumi Aksara, 2015), 10.

⁴ Muhammad Syarifudin et al., *The Privilege Of The Coccyx Based On The Study Of The Qur'an And Science*, *Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, (Vol. 1, No. 2, 2019), 195.

⁵ Ibid.

B. Methods

This article uses library research as its main method, which is a series of activities to collect data from literature sources.⁶ This research is a literature study, meaning that it relies on various written sources⁷ relevant to the topic being studied. The approach applied in this article is a descriptive qualitative content analysis. The author uses the *Maudhu'i* interpretation method (thematic interpretation), which involves classifying and linking verses from various surahs of the Qur'an that discuss the same topic. The goal is to draw a comprehensive conclusion regarding the topic from the perspective of the Qur'an.⁸ This method is carried out by gathering related verses of the Qur'an that discuss the same topic or issue, which are then analyzed in depth.⁹

C. Body of the article

1. Terminology and the Concept of the Sulbi

Etymologically, the word *sulbi* refers to qualities of toughness, strength, and hardness. In various Arabic lexicons, *as-Solb* is defined as the spinal column extending from the shoulder area to the lowest part of the back.¹⁰ This term also carries a metaphorical meaning referring to lineage or ancestry, specifically denoting the purity of Arab genealogy.¹¹ According to Sa'id Sholah Adh-Dhuyumiy in the book *Al-I'jaz Ath-Thibbi fii Al-Qur'an Al-Karim*, *sulb* refers to the spinal column (backbone) and *tara'ib* refers to the rib cage (thoracic cavity).¹²

The term *sulbi* appears eight times across seven different surahs with various classifications of meaning¹³:

- a. Meaning of Crucifixion: Found in QS. An-Nisa' (157), QS. Yusuf (41), QS. Al-A'raf (124), QS. Thaha (71), QS. Asy-Syu'ara (49), and QS. Al-Maidah (33).
- b. Anatomical Meaning (Back): Found in QS. Ath-Thariq (7).

⁶ Mahmud, *Educational Research Methods*, (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2011), 31.

⁷ Abdul Halim Hanafi, *Language Research Methodology for Thesis and Dissertation Research*, (Jakarta: Diadit Media Press, 2011), 273.

⁸ Samsul Bahri, *Methodology of Qur'anic and Tafsir Research*, (Aceh: Bandar Publishing, 2023), 79.

⁹ Mustaqim, *Educational Research Methods*, (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2011), 46.

¹⁰ Ibnu Manzhur, *Lisan al-Arab*, 369-370.

¹¹ Dr. Muhammad Fayyadh, *The Miracles of Qur'anic Verses in Explaining the Creation of Man*, trans. Leni Nurazizah, (Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2015), 59.

¹² Sa'id Sholah Adh-Dhuyumiy, *Medical Miracles in the Noble Qur'an*, (Maktabah Al-Qudsi), 11.

¹³ Muhammad Fu'ad Abdul Baqi, *The Indexed Dictionary of the Words of the Holy Qur'an*, (Cairo: Dar al-Hadits), 409-410.

c. Meaning of Biological Children: Found in QS. An-Nisa' (23).

Most exegesis and linguistic experts agree that *as-Solb* is synonymous with *az-Zuhr*, which specifically refers to a certain part of the back rather than its entire structure, as indicated in QS. Al-A'raf: 172:¹⁴

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ وَآسْهَدَهُمْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ شَهِدْنَا أَن
تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ

And remember) when your Lord brought forth from the loins of the children of Adam their descendants and made them testify of themselves, (saying), 'Am I not your Lord?' They said, 'Yes, we have testified.' (This was) lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, 'Indeed, we were unaware of this.

The meaning of this verse is that the testes—which produce seminal fluid—are originally located inside the abdomen near the spinal column. This Quranic scientific fact has been proven through embryonic anatomy in the modern era. The testes migrate from their original position within the abdomen as the fetus grows, then descend into their specific sac (the scrotum) before birth.¹⁵

Some children are born with one or both testes still remaining in the abdomen (undescended testes). This condition can hinder the child's growth and expose them to hormonal disorders unless a surgical procedure is performed to lower the testes into the scrotum.¹⁶

Medically, the *sulbi* or coccyx represents the terminal end of the vertebral column. In humans and tail-less primates, this part is formed by the fusion of three to five coccygeal vertebrae.¹⁷ In a broader scope, this structure encompasses the thoracic (chest), lumbar (lower back), and sacral (pelvis) regions.¹⁸

From a neurological standpoint, this spinal region plays a vital role as the center for reproductive nerves. The autonomic nervous system—which regulates sexual activities such as erection and ejaculation—is controlled by nerve plexuses originating in the spine. These networks include:

¹⁴ Dr. Muhammad Fayyadh, *The Miracles of Quranic Verses in Explaining the Creation of Man*, trans. Leni Nurazizah, 59.

¹⁵ Sa'id Sholah Adh-Dhuyumiy, *Medical Miracles in the Noble Qur'an*, (Maktabah Al-Qudsi), 11.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Elizabeth A. Martin, *A Dictionary of Science*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2012), trans. Ahmad Lintang Lazuardi, 1130.

¹⁸ Dr. Ahsin Sakho Muhammad et al., *Encyclopedia of Scientific Miracles in the Qur'an and Sunnah 2*, trans. Masturi Ilham Lc et al., (Jakarta: PT Kharisma Ilmu, 2009), 45.

- Solar plexus: A sympathetic nerve network behind the stomach.
- Hypogastric plexus: Located between the pubic area and the navel.
- Pelvic plexus: Located in the pelvic region.

The sympathetic system (which increases body activity) and the parasympathetic system (which decreases it) work integratively in this area to regulate vascular functions and human sexual responses. This neural coordination is centered at the twelfth thoracic vertebra (T12), the first and second lumbar vertebrae (L1-L2), and the sacral section (S2-S4).¹⁹

2. The Origin of Human Creation

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ مِمَّ خُلِقَ خُلِقَ مِنْ مَّاءٍ دَافِقٍ يُخْرَجُ مِنْ بَيْنِ الصُّلْبِ وَالتَّرَائِبِ

So let man observe from what he was created. He was created from a fluid, ejected, emerging from between the backbone and the ribs. (Ath-Thariq: 5-7)

The description in the aforementioned verse indicates that Allah SWT created humans from a fluid ejected from the region between the backbone and the ribs (chest bones). Based on modern scientific perspectives, it is known that during the embryonic phase, the reproductive organs—the testes in males and the ovaries in females—begin to develop near the kidneys, situated between the spinal column and the eleventh and twelfth ribs.²⁰

During their development, these organs undergo a change in position; the ovaries settle in the pelvic region, while the testes descend into the scrotum. Despite this migration, in an adult body, these organs still receive their nerve supply and nutrients from the same original point. Anatomically, the blood vessels supplying the testes (testicular artery) and the ovaries (ovarian artery) originate from a single location situated between the backbone and the chest bones.²¹

This is another confirmation regarding the initial location of the human reproductive glands. Modern studies have shown that the primordium (nucleus) of the reproductive and urinary systems in the fetus appears between the cartilaginous cells that form the spinal column and the cells that form the rib cage. The kidneys remain in their place, while the testes descend to their natural location in the scrotum at birth.²²

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Dr. Zakir Naik, *The Qur'an and Modern Science: Compatible or Incompatible?* (Yogyakarta: Sketsa, n.d.), 199.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Sa'id Sholah Adh-Dhuyumiy, *Medical Miracles in the Noble Qur'an*, (Maktabah Al-Qudsi), 12.

Despite the descent of the testes, the artery that supplies them with blood throughout life still branches from the aorta at a position parallel to the renal artery. Likewise, the nerve that transmits sensation to them and assists in the production of sperm and its associated fluids originates from the 10th thoracic nerve, which exits the spinal cord between the 10th and 11th ribs.²³

From this, it is clearly evident that the reproductive organs, along with the nerves and blood vessels that supply them, originate from a position in the body located between the *sulbi* and the *tara'ib* (the spinal column and the rib cage).²⁴

3. Exegetical and Osteological Review of the Concepts of Shulbi and Tara'ib

فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ مِمَّ خُلِقَ خُلِقَ مِنْ مَّاءٍ دَافِقٍ يُخْرُجُ مِنْ بَيْنِ الصُّلْبِ وَالتَّرَائِبِ

So let man observe from what he was created. He was created from a fluid, ejected, emerging from between the backbone and the ribs. (Ath-Thariq: 5-7)

Thantawi Jauhari, in his work *Tafsir al-Jawahir*, provides an explanation regarding the verse *Yakhruju min bain ash-Shulbi wa at-Tara'ib*. According to him, this verse refers to the seminal fluids of both men and women, which emerge from each individual to subsequently merge into a single entity.²⁵

It should be understood that while the brain serves as the center for intellect and thought, the nervous system located within the spinal column represents its functional manifestation throughout the body. This neural network possesses extensive branches connected to every part of the body, providing instructions to the limbs for physical activity. In fact, the physiological ability to engage in sexual intercourse would be impossible without the role of this nervous system. Meanwhile, the term *tara'ib* is understood as the area of a woman's chest where jewelry and necklaces are placed for adornment. Therefore, for a man, the crucial aspect during marital intimacy is the vitality of the muscles and nerves originating from the spinal neural structure.²⁶

On the other hand, for a woman, the most significant elements during such intimacy are aesthetic adornment and what is contained within her chest or heart. If her heart is in a good state and her appearance is beautiful, the conditions for obtaining offspring become perfect. Based on

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Thantawi Jauhari, *Al-Jawahir*, (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.), 114.

²⁶ Ibid.

this logic, men are represented by the term *shulbi* (backbone) and women by the term *tara'ib* (chest bones), which simultaneously demonstrates the linguistic beauty of the Qur'an.²⁷

In the study of *Ilmu Bayan* (rhetoric), this phenomenon is known as *majaz mursal* (synecdoche), a technique where a specific significant part of the body is mentioned but is intended to encompass the entire body as a whole. This is similar to using the word *raqabah* (neck) to refer to a slave or *ra'sun* (head) to refer to a ram, where the intention is the entire individual rather than just the specific body part. However, because the *shulbi* and *tara'ib* are the most distinctive parts of men and women respectively, these two terms were chosen to represent them. Thus, in this matter, both husband and wife possess unique body parts used as symbols until their goal of obtaining offspring is achieved.²⁸

From a linguistic perspective, linguists agree that *as-Shulbi* refers to the structure of the backbone extending from the shoulders to the lower back. This term also carries sociological connotations, meaning lineage or purity of origin. Meanwhile, *at-Tara'ib* (derived from the word *taribah*) specifically describes the chest area, covering the region between the breasts and the collarbone, or the four pairs of ribs in the upper chest where necklaces are worn.²⁹

Within the perspective of *Tafsir* (exegesis), there are differing opinions; some scholars identify *as-Shulbi* with the male and *at-Tara'ib* with the female, while others view both as a unified part of the reproductive process. However, lexical analysis shows that *as-Shulbi* is synonymous with *az-Zuhr*, referring to a specific part of the back rather than the whole. Similarly, *at-Tara'ib* covers only specific ribs, not the entire chest skeletal structure.³⁰

Anatomically, when associated with the 33 vertebrae of the human spine, *as-Shulbi* encompasses the 12 thoracic vertebrae, 5 lumbar vertebrae, and 5 sacral vertebrae, totaling 22 vertebrae starting from below the neck to the base of the back. On the other hand, *at-Tara'ib* is understood more specifically as the four pairs of upper ribs positioned parallel to the collarbone, providing a more precise anatomical boundary than a general mention of the ribs.³¹

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Dr. Muhammad Fayyadh, *The Miracles of Quranic Verses in Explaining the Creation of Man*, trans. Leni Nurazizah, 59.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid, 60.

D. Conclusion

The concept of *i'jaz tibbi* (medical miraculousness) in these verses reveals anatomical facts regarding the origin of the human reproductive organs. Scientifically, it has been discovered that during the embryonic phase, the testes (in males) and ovaries (in females) first develop in the area near the kidneys, specifically in a position located between the backbone (*sulbi*) and the breastbone (*tara'ib*). Although these organs eventually migrate to their natural positions—the testes descending into the scrotum and the ovaries into the pelvis—as the fetus grows, the traces of their origin are preserved through the nerve supply and blood vessels, which continue to originate from the initial point of development between the spine and the ribs.

Terminologically, *sulbi* refers to the sturdy backbone as the center of the reproductive nerves, while *tara'ib* refers to the area of the ribs or chest. The integration between the two is crucial because the autonomic nervous system that regulates sexual function, such as the solar plexus and the pelvic plexus, originates from the spinal structure. This aligns with the explanation in QS. Ath-Thariq: 5-7, which states that man is created from a fluid ejected from a region between the backbone and the breastbone, which anatomically serves as the initial site where the nuclei of the reproductive and urinary systems appear in the fetus.

Beyond the aspect of physical anatomy, the use of the terms *sulbi* and *tara'ib* in the Qur'an also contains linguistic beauty (*majaz mursal*) that represents men and women in their entirety through their most significant body parts. *Sulbi* symbolizes the vitality and neural strength of men, while *tara'ib* symbolizes the beauty and emotional aspects of women.

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