

THE CONCEPT OF REPENTANCE IN THE STORY OF PROPHET YUNUS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR HUMAN CHARACTER FORMATION IN THE QUR'ĀN

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the concept of repentance (*tawbah*) in the story of Prophet Yunus (Jonah) and its implications for human character formation from a Qur'ānic perspective. The research is motivated by the increasing moral, spiritual, and psychological challenges of contemporary society. According to the World Health Organization, nearly one in seven people worldwide experienced mental disorders in 2021, indicating the need for approaches that integrate spiritual and psychological well-being. The story of Prophet Yunus contains educational and spiritual values that are relevant to self-reformation and character development. This study employs a qualitative library research approach using thematic Qur'ānic exegesis (*tafsīr mawḍū'ī*). Data were collected from Qur'ānic verses related to the story of Prophet Yunus and analyzed through classical and contemporary tafsir literature. The findings reveal five essential dimensions of repentance: remorse, self-improvement, patience, glorification of Allah through tasbih, and seeking Allah's help. These dimensions contribute to the development of positive character traits, including humility, wisdom, self-confidence, emotional balance, and optimism. The study further argues that repentance functions not only as a theological doctrine but also as a transformative spiritual practice that supports moral development and psychological well-being. Consistent with insights from the psychology of religion, repentance may serve as a form of spiritual self-reformation that enhances emotional regulation and resilience. Therefore, the story of Prophet Yunus offers a Qur'ānic framework for character formation grounded in Islamic spirituality and relevant to addressing contemporary moral and psychological challenges.

Keywords: Repentance; Prophet Yunus; Character Formation; Islamic spirituality; thematic tafsir.

INTRODUCTION

Repentance is one of the fundamental concepts in Islam that encompasses spiritual, moral, and psychological dimensions.¹ In Islamic teachings, repentance is not merely understood as seeking forgiveness for sins, but also as a process of self-transformation toward a better life.² This concept positions human beings as creatures who are given the opportunity to correct their mistakes, purify their souls, and restore their relationship with Allah SWT.³ In contemporary life, however, repentance is often narrowly understood as a temporary act performed only during hardship or under particular life pressures.⁴ Qur'ānic studies on *kullīyyāt al-asālīb al-Qur'āniyyah*

¹ Nur Azizah, "Konsep Taubat Dalam Al-Qur'an: Studi Komparatif Tafsir Al-Asās Fī Al-Tafsīr Dan Tafsir Al-Azhar" (Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, 2024), 2.

² Enovia Lendra, "Haikat Taubat Dan Implementasinya Menurut Abu Al-Qasim Al-Qushairī," *Jurnal Al-Aqidah* 14, 1 (2022): 76, <https://doi.org/10.15548/ja.v14i1.3905>.

³ Lendra, 76.

⁴ Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghaib*, Vol 26 (Beirut: Dar al- Kutub Al-Ilmiyah, 2000), 356.

further show that the linguistic style of the Qur'ān embodies universal principles that extend beyond language to the spiritual and moral values of humanity. Grasping these universal meanings provides an essential foundation for understanding repentance as a means of self-introspection, emotional control, and behavioral improvement. Thus, repentance is understood not merely as a form of forgiveness for sins, but also as a spiritual education that carries implications for the comprehensive formation of human character.⁵

Amid globalization and rapid technological advancement, modern human beings face a range of moral and spiritual problems, such as identity crises, emotional instability, individualism, and declining religious awareness.⁶ These conditions demonstrate the importance of spiritual values as a means of developing better human character. From the Islamic perspective, repentance serves as a form of spiritual education capable of fostering self-awareness, emotional control, and closeness to Allah SWT, which consequently influence the formation of human morality and behavior.⁷

The story of Prophet Yunus (AS) in the Qur'ān serves as an important representation of the urgency of self-introspection and repentance.⁸ Sent to the people of Nineveh, who were immersed in polytheism and idol worship, Prophet Yunus left his people after his preaching was rejected, without permission from Allah SWT, and was subsequently tested by being swallowed by a great fish at sea. In such circumstances, Prophet Yunus expressed self-recognition, remorse, and supplication, which reflected repentance and total surrender to Allah SWT.⁹ This story not only illustrates the spiritual values embodied by a prophet, but also conveys moral lessons concerning the importance of self-awareness, behavioral reform, and emotional control in human life.

Modern society today is also facing an increasingly complex crisis of personality.¹⁰ Rising rates of suicide, bullying, violence, drug abuse, and mental health disorders point to deep spiritual and moral problems within contemporary human life.¹¹ These conditions reflect the growing distance of human beings from religious and spiritual values, resulting in inner unrest, anxiety, depression, and emotional instability.¹² Therefore, the tradition of Qur'ānic exegesis continues to develop in order to address the social and moral problems of society across different eras. The development of Qur'ānic interpretation in the Nusantara demonstrates that the Qur'ān is understood not merely as a religious text, but also as a guide for the formation of ethics, spirituality, and human

⁵ Fahmi Akhyar Al Farabi and Farhan Afif Al-Kindi, "Al-Manhaj al-Tafsīrī Li-Kulliyyāt al-Asālīb: Dirāsah Taḥlīliyyah Fī Juhūd al-Mufasssīrīn wa Ta'thīrūhā 'Alā Fahm al-Naṣṣ al-Qur'ānī," *Al-Karim: International Journal of Quranic and Islamic Studies* 2, 1 (2024): 17, <https://doi.org/10.33367/al-karim.v2i1.5199>.

⁶ Muh. Karumiadri et al., "Urgensi Pendidikan Spiritual dalam Hadis: Sebuah Kajian Tematik," *Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 14, 1 (May 24, 2025): 204, <https://doi.org/10.15408/quhas.v14i1.44462>.

⁷ Fahmi Akhyar Al Farabi et al., "Epistemological Study of Ḥasan Baṣrī's Qirā'ah: Methodology and Its Implications in Qur'anic Interpretation," *Journal of Qur'an and Hadith Studies* 13, 1 (2024): 127, <https://doi.org/10.15408/quhas.v13i1.39699>.

⁸ Muhammad bin Muhammad bin Mahmud Abu Manshur al-Maturidi, *Sharḥ Fiqh al-Akbar* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2009), 39.

⁹ Lukman Nul Hakim, "Kisah Nabi Yunus A.S dalam Al- Qur'an," *Al Ikhlil* 1, 2 (2023): 147–148.

¹⁰ Zubaedi, *Desain Pendidikan Karakter* (Jakarta: Prenada media Group, 2011), 5.

¹¹ Abuddin Nata, *Manajemen Pendidikan: Mengatasi Kelemahan Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia* (Jakarta: Prenada Media, 2003), 222.

¹² Musthafa Syaikh Ibrahim Haqqi, *Al-Taubah Min Al-Ma'aṣī Wa Al-Dhunūb* (Beirut: Dār al-Ḥadārah li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 2004), 39.

character in confronting the challenges of modern life.¹³

Islam offers the concept of repentance as a spiritual solution in confronting such problems. Repentance is not merely understood as seeking forgiveness, but rather as a method of self-reformation that includes remorse, self-evaluation, commitment to abandoning sin, and efforts to improve one's behavior.¹⁴ From the Islamic perspective, the entire process of character formation is founded upon the value of tawhid, which places spiritual consciousness as the primary foundation of human life. As reflected in the concept of knowledge integration based on tawhid, spiritual awareness not only generates rational and accurate thinking, but also shapes ethics, moral responsibility, and human self-awareness in living life.¹⁵ Thus, repentance has broad implications for the formation of human character in spiritual, moral, and social dimensions. The story of Prophet Yunus serves as a concrete example of how the process of repentance can cultivate self-awareness, steadfastness, and positive character transformation.

Although studies on repentance and the story of Prophet Yunus are abundant, most previous research has examined exegetical, Sufi, or educational dimensions separately. For Instance, Yusrina Elfa Sari's study, "Ḥaqīqat al-Tawbah fī Qiṣṣat Nabī Yūnus (Dirāsah Muqāranah baina Tafsīr al-Qushairī wa Tafsīr al-Jailānī)" focuses on a comparative analysis of the concept of repentance in the exegetical works of Al-Qushairi and Al-Jailani.¹⁶ The study concludes that repentance in the story of Prophet Yunus encompasses several dimensions, including remorse, self-improvement, patience, glorification of Allah through *tasbīḥ*, and seeking divine assistance. Similarly, Muhammad Nazri bin Muhammad Yusuf's research on the concept of repentance according to Sheikh Abdul Qadir Al-Jailani emphasizes repentance as a means of closing the door to past sins and preventing future transgressions.¹⁷ In contrast, Muhammad Nadhif's study explores the character education values embedded in the story of Prophet Yunus, such as *tawḥīd*, patience, self-introspection, reliance upon Allah (*tawakkul*), and responsibility.¹⁸

Despite these valuable contributions, previous studies have generally treated repentance and character formation as separate areas of inquiry. To date, little attention has been given to how the various dimensions of repentance in the story of Prophet Yunus contribute to the development of specific character traits through a comprehensive Qur'ānic analysis. This study seeks to address this gap by integrating both perspectives and examining the relationship between repentance and human character formation within the Qur'ānic narrative of Prophet Yunus.

Unlike previous studies, this research focuses specifically on the implications of repentance for the formation of human character. It not only examines repentance as a spiritual and theological concept but also analyzes how its values function as a means of self-reformation and spiritual

¹³ Fahmi Akhyar Al Farabi et al., "The Continuity of Qur'anic Exegesis In Sumatra: A Study on Abdurrauf Singkel, Haka, and Hamka," *Jurnal Fuaduna: Jurnal Kajian Keagamaan Dan Kemasyarakatan* 9, 2 (2025): 20.

¹⁴ Ibnul Qayyim al-Jauziah, *Madārij al-Sālikīn* (Beirut: Dar al- Kutub Al-Ilmiyah, 1408), 199.

¹⁵ Aqdi Rofiq Asnawi, Muhammad Diaz Supandi, and Fahmi Akhyar Al Farabi, "The Qur'an and Mathematics: The Dimension of Tawhid and Knowledge in the Perspective of Afzalur Rahman," *QiST: Journal of Quran and Tafseer Studies* 5, 2 (2026): 477–96, <https://doi.org/10.23917/qist.v5i2.13865>.

¹⁶ Yusrina Elva Sari, "Ḥaqīqat Al-Taubah Fī Qiṣṣati Yūnus 'Alaihi Al-Salām (Dirāsah Muqāranah bayna Tafsir al-Qusyairi wa Tafsir al-Jailani)" (Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2021), VI.

¹⁷ Muhammad Nazri bin Mohd Yusof, "Konsep Taubat Menurut Syekh Abdul Qadir Al-Jīlānī" (Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, 2018), I.

¹⁸ Muhammad Nadhif, "Nilai-Nilai Pendidikan Karakter Yang Terkandung Pada Kisah Nabi Yunus AS dalam Al-Qur'an" (Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2021), VII.

healing in responding to the moral and psychological challenges of contemporary society. By doing so, this study offers a more integrative perspective on the relationship between repentance, spirituality, and character development within the framework of Islamic teachings.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to analyze the concept of repentance in the story of Prophet Yunus and its implications for human character formation. It is expected to contribute to the development of thematic Qur'ānic exegesis and Islamic spiritual psychology while demonstrating that repentance serves as an essential foundation for cultivating noble character in spiritual, moral, and social dimensions.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using library research as its primary research method.¹⁹ Data were collected through documentation techniques, by examining classical and contemporary literature related to the concept of repentance, the story of Prophet Yunus, and character formation in the Qur'ān. Library research was employed to examine and analyze concepts, interpretations, and the views of scholars relevant to the theme of this study. This research also applies a descriptive-analytical method by describing the Qur'ānic verses concerning the story of Prophet Yunus and subsequently analyzing their implications for the formation of human character.²⁰

The primary data sources in this study consist of Qur'ānic verses related to the story of Prophet Yunus, particularly QS. al-Anbiyā' [21]: 87–88, QS. al-Şāffāt [37]: 139–148, and QS. al-Qalam [68]: 48–50, as well as classical and contemporary exegetical works such as *Tafsīr al-Qurtubī*, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, *Ta'wīlāt Ahl al-Sunnah*, and *Madārij al-Sālikīn*. Meanwhile, the secondary data sources were obtained from books, scientific journals, undergraduate theses, and previous studies discussing repentance, spiritual psychology, character education, and the values contained in the story of Prophet Yunus.

The data analysis technique was carried out through several stages, namely data reduction, data classification, interpretation, and conclusion drawing.²¹ The researchers first identified the verses and interpretations related to the concept of repentance in the story of Prophet Yunus, then classified the values of repentance and analyzed their relevance to the formation of human character. Through this analytical process, the study aims to reveal the stages of repentance in the story of Prophet Yunus and explain their implications for the development of human spiritual, moral, and psychological character in contemporary life.

¹⁹Yayan Rakhtikwati and Dadan Rusmana, *Metodologi Penelitian Tafsir Al-Qur'an* (Bandung: Pustaka Setia, 2013), 10.

²⁰Sukmawati Nasir, "Analysis of Research Data Quantitative and Qualitative," *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan* 7, 1 (2023): 368–373.

²¹Qoree Butlam Abdul Rohman, Barikli Mubaroqa, "Methodology of Tafseer Al-Qurtubi: Sources, Styles and Manhaj," *QIST: Journal of Qur'an and Tafseer Studies* 2, 2 (2023), 180, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.23917/qist.v2i2.1451>.

RESULT

This study finds that the concept of repentance in the story of Prophet Yunus possesses a spiritual dimension that is closely related to the formation of human character. Based on the analysis of Qur'ānic verses and the interpretations of Muslim exegetes, repentance in the story of Prophet Yunus is understood not merely as a form of seeking forgiveness from Allah SWT, but also as a process of self-reformation that gives rise to spiritual, emotional, and social character transformation. The findings reveal five principal values underlying the essence of repentance in the story of Prophet Yunus, namely remorse, self-improvement, patience, tasbih, and seeking help from Allah. These dimensions are consistent with the findings of Sari (2021)²², who identified similar aspects of repentance in her comparative study of the interpretations of Al-Qushairi and Al-Jailani. However, rather than focusing on the concept of repentance itself, the present study extends the discussion by examining the implications of these dimensions for human character formation. The analysis demonstrates that the five aspects of repentance contribute to the development of humility, wisdom, self-confidence, emotional balance, and optimism, thereby highlighting the transformative role of repentance in shaping individual character.

The Biography of Prophet Yunus and the Concept of Narrative in the Qur'ān

Prophet Yunus (AS), whose full name was Yunus bin Matta, was descended from the Children of Israel and was sent to the people of Nineveh in the region of Mosul, Iraq.²³ In the Qur'ān, he is also known by the title *Dhū al-Nūn* due to the event of being swallowed by a great fish.²⁴ The story of Prophet Yunus illustrates the journey of prophetic preaching, spiritual trials, and the process of repentance, which ultimately became a lesson for humankind.²⁵ After leaving his people in a state of anger, he was tested by Allah SWT by being placed inside the belly of a great fish before ultimately being saved through the supplication and *tasbīh* that he recited.

The story of Prophet Yunus is part of the Qur'ānic narratives that carry educational and spiritual functions.²⁶ In the study of 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān, narrative (*qiṣaṣ*) is understood as accounts of previous communities, prophets, or particular events conveyed in order to provide lessons for humankind.²⁷ The narratives in the Qur'ān are not merely historical documentation, but also serve as a means of moral education, strengthening faith, and reinforcing the heart in facing various trials of life. Therefore, the story of Prophet Yunus holds significant relevance in cultivating spiritual awareness and the formation of human character.

The Concept of Repentance in Islam

The findings of this study indicate that repentance in Islam signifies returning to Allah SWT with deep remorse for the sins committed, accompanied by a commitment to abandon such actions.

²² Sari, "Hakikat At-Taubah Fī Qiṣṣati Yūnus 'Alaihi Al-Salām (Dirāsah Muqāranah Bayna Tafsir Al-Qusyairi Wa Tafsir Al-Jailani)," 75.

²³ Muḥammad 'Alī al-Ṣabūnī, *Al-Nubuwwah wa al-Anbiyā'*. Translated by Arifin Jamian Maun (Surabaya: PT Bina Ilmu, 1993), 520.

²⁴ Hilmi 'Alī Sya'bani, *Silsilah Qaṣaṣ al-Anbiyā': Yūnus 'Alayh al-Salām* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1991), 3.

²⁵ Abū 'Abdillāh Muḥammad bin Aḥmad al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭūbī, *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (Kairo: Dar Al-Kutub Al-'Arabi, 1964), 875. Vol?

²⁶ Ismā'īl bin 'Umar Ibn Kathīr, *Qaṣaṣ al-Anbiyā'* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2004), 414.

²⁷ Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa al-Nihāyah* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1986) 157-158.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah explains that repentance is a transition from what is hated by Allah to what is loved by Him.²⁸ Meanwhile, Ibn Taymiyyah classifies repentance into obligatory repentance (*tawbah wājibah*) and recommended repentance (*tawbah sunnah*), whereas Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Tuwayjiri categorizes it into sincere repentance (*tawbah ṣaḥīḥah*), true repentance (*tawbah naṣūḥah*), and invalid repentance (*tawbah fāsidah*).²⁹

In the modern context, the concept of repentance remains relevant as a form of humanity's return to divine values amid the spiritual crisis caused by the secularization of knowledge. Said Nursi, through *Risale-i Nur*, emphasizes the importance of integrating revelation, reason, and nature in constructing a holistic and theocentric paradigm of knowledge.³⁰ Thus, repentance is understood not merely as remorse for personal sins, but also as an effort to restore the relationship between human beings, God, knowledge, and moral values within contemporary life.

In general, the primary conditions of repentance include remorse, abandoning sin, and resolving not to repeat it.³¹ In addition, repentance must be performed sincerely and before the arrival of death.³² This study also finds that repentance has a significant influence on the psychological condition of human beings, as it can eliminate inner anxiety, provide peace of mind, and cultivate sincerity in worshiping Allah SWT.

The Concept of Human Personality

Personality is understood as the integration of physical, mental, emotional, and social aspects that shape an individual's behavior.³³ Al-Ghazali explains that personality is a stable condition of the soul that gives rise to spontaneous actions without requiring prolonged deliberation.³⁴ Personality is influenced by internal factors, such as psychological and genetic conditions, as well as external factors in the form of social and cultural environments.³⁵

This study finds that the formation of human personality is associated with various elements, such as empathy, intelligence, courage, optimism, humility, emotional balance, and self-confidence.³⁶ In this context, the concept of repentance in the story of Prophet Yunus contributes to strengthening these personality elements through processes of introspection, self-control, and spiritual closeness to Allah SWT.

²⁸Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jauziah, *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, 199.

²⁹Taqiy al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Taubah* (Kairo: Maktabah al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1997), 13.

³⁰Alzena Mahesadewi Falquinzani, Arum Sari, and Fahmi Akhyar Al Farabi, "The Epistemology of Tawḥīd in Said Nursi's Perspective as a Response to the Secularization of Modern Knowledge," *Al-Mashadir: Journal of Quranic Sciences and Tafsir* 2, 1 (2026): 264–73.

³¹Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jauziah, *Madārij Al-Sālikīn*, 199.

³²Muḥammad bin Ṣāliḥ al-ʿUthaymīn, *Al-Sharḥ al-Mumtīʿ ʿalā Zād Al-Mustaḥqīq* (Riyadh: Dār Ibn al-Jawzi, 2002), 308.

³³Jamāl al-Dīn Ibn Manẓūr al-Anṣārī, *Lisān Al-ʿArab* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1873), 2211.

³⁴Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad bin Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, Juz 3 (Beirut: Dār Ibn Hazm, 2005), 53.

³⁵Muḥammad ʿAtīyyah al-Abrashi, *Al-Shakhṣiyyah* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Maʿārif, 1944), 16.

³⁶Al-Abrashi, 16-17.

The Essence of Repentance in the Story of Prophet Yunus

The analysis shows that the essence of repentance in the story of Prophet Yunus is reflected in several key aspects. First, remorse.

فَلَوْلَا كَانَتْ قَرْيَةٌ آمَنَتْ فَنَفَعَهَا إِيمَانُهَا إِلَّا قَوْمٌ يُونُسَ لَمَّا آمَنُوا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ عَذَابَ الْخِزْيِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا
وَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ (98)

(QS. Yunus: 98)

This verse explains that the people of Prophet Yunus were the only previous community who collectively believed after witnessing the signs of punishment, so Allah lifted the punishment from them. Ibn ‘Āshūr interprets this verse as a warning for the people of Makkah not to repeat the mistakes of previous nations who were destroyed for denying their messengers.³⁷

As reflected in the repentance of the people of Prophet Yunus, who ultimately believed after recognizing their mistakes.³⁸ Remorse becomes the first step in spiritual transformation, as it gives rise to awareness of one’s sins and mistakes.

Second, self-improvement.

وَدَا النُّونَ إِذْ ذَهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ فَنَادَىٰ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي
كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (87) فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْغَمِّ وَكَذَلِكَ نُنْجِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (88)

.(QS. Al-Anbiya’: 87-88)

Exegetes such as Wahbah al-Zuhayli,³⁹ al-Rāzī,⁴⁰ and Ibn ‘Āshūr agree that “ذو النون” is a title of Prophet Yunus due to his association with the great fish (الحوت). This verse highlights his story as evidence of Allah’s power, his remorse over his decision, and Allah’s acceptance of his supplication.⁴¹

Self-improvement is reflected in the supplication of Prophet Yunus inside the belly of the fish:

“*Lā ilāha illā anta subḥānaka innī kuntu mina ḡ-ẓālimīn.*”

This supplication demonstrates the acknowledgment of Allah’s oneness, His transcendence above all imperfections, and the recognition of one’s own mistakes.⁴² This reflects the process of introspection and self-improvement, which lies at the core of repentance.

Third, patience.

³⁷Muḥammad Ibn Ṭāhir Ibn ‘Āshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, Vol 17 (Tunis: Dār al-Tūnīsiyah, 1983), 288.

³⁸Fakhr al-Dīn Al-Rāzī, *Maḥāṭib Al-Ghayb*, Vol 22 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1999), 303.

³⁹Wahbah bin Muṣṭafā al-Zuhaylī, *Al-Taḥfīr al-Munīr fī al-‘Aqīdah al-Sharī‘ah wa al-Manhaj*, Vol 17 (Damaskus: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu‘āṣir, 1998), 271.

⁴⁰Al-Rāzī, *Maḥāṭib Al-Ghayb*, Vol 22, 303.

⁴¹Ibn ‘Āshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, Vol 1, 104.

⁴²Al-Rāzī, *Maḥāṭib Al-Ghayb*, Vol 22, 617.

فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُنْ كَصَاحِبِ الْخُوْتِ إِذْ نَادَىٰ وَهُوَ مَكْظُومٌ (48) لَوْلَا أَن تَدَارَكُهُ نِعْمَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ لَنُبِذَ بِالْعَرَاءِ وَهُوَ مَذْمُومٌ (49) فَاجْتَبَاهُ رَبُّهُ فَجَعَلَهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (50)

(QS. Ash-Shaffat: 48-50)

In the verse, “فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُنْ كَصَاحِبِ الْخُوْتِ” Allah commands Prophet Muhammad to remain patient in facing the challenges of his preaching and not to be like Prophet Yunus (AS), who hastily left his people in a state of anger. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī explains that this verse serves as a reminder for the Prophet to remain steadfast and not to lose hope.⁴³ Wahbah al-Zuhayli adds that the story of Prophet Yunus (AS) serves as a lesson for Prophet Muhammad to be more patient in dealing with the polytheists.⁴⁴

Patience, as reflected in Allah’s command to Prophet Muhammad not to be like Prophet Yunus, who hastily left his people.⁴⁵ Patience in this story is understood as the ability to control emotions and to remain steadfast in facing the trials of preaching as well as life in general.

Fourth, *tasbīh* (glorification of Allah).

وَإِنَّ يُوسُفَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (139) إِذْ أَبَقَ إِلَى الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُونِ (140) فَسَاهَمَ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُدْحَضِينَ (141) فَالْتَقَمَهُ الْخُوْتُ وَهُوَ مُلِيمٌ (142) فَلَوْلَا أَنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُسَبِّحِينَ (143) لَلَبِثَ فِي بَطْنِهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ (144)

(Qs. Ash-Shaffat: 139-144)

This verse serves as the conclusion of the narratives in the surah, presenting the story of Prophet Yunus (AS) as a lesson for Prophet Muhammad to remain patient in facing his people. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī explains that the event of Prophet Yunus occurred after he had been appointed as a prophet, although there is another opinion stating that he was only appointed as a messenger after the incident inside the belly of the fish.⁴⁶

Tasbīh, which became the cause of Prophet Yunus’s salvation. Allah emphasizes that if Prophet Yunus had not been among those who frequently glorified Him, he would have remained in the belly of the fish until the Day of Resurrection.⁴⁷ This demonstrates the importance of *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah) and spiritual closeness to Allah in facing life’s difficulties.

Fifth, seeking help from Allah.

فَنَبَذْنَاهُ بِالْعَرَاءِ وَهُوَ سَقِيمٌ (145) وَأَنْبَتْنَا عَلَيْهِ شَجَرَةً مِّنْ يَقْطِينٍ (146) وَأَرْسَلْنَاهُ إِلَىٰ مِائَةِ أَلْفٍ أَوْ يَزِيدُونَ (147) فَأَمَنُوا فَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ (148)

(QS. Ash-Shaffat: 145-148)

⁴³Al-Rāzī, Vol 30, 617.

⁴⁴Al-Zuhayli, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-‘Aqīdah wa al-Sharī‘ah wa al-Manhaj*, Vol 29, 75.

⁴⁵Ibn ‘Āshūr, *Al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, Vol 29, 106.

⁴⁶Al-Rāzī, *Maḥāṭib al-Ghayb*, vol 30, 617.

⁴⁷Ibn ‘Āshūr, *Al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, vol 29, 107.

After Prophet Yunus (AS) was brought out of the belly of the fish, Allah placed him on barren land without trees, possibly on the bank of the Tigris River. His body was in a weakened condition, resembling that of a newborn baby.⁴⁸

Seeking help from Allah is reflected in Prophet Yunus's supplication when he prayed in a state of complete helplessness.⁴⁹ Allah then saved him, caused a gourd plant to grow to restore his strength, and returned him to his people, who eventually believed.

DISCUSSION

The Implications of Repentance for Human Character

This study finds that the concept of repentance in the story of Prophet Yunus has significant implications for the formation of human character.

First, repentance cultivates humility.

فَلَوْلَا كَانَتْ قَرْيَةٌ آمَنَتْ فَنَفَعَهَا إِيمَانُهَا إِلَّا قَوْمَ يُونُسَ لَمَّا آمَنُوا كَشَفْنَا عَنْهُمْ غَدَابَ الْحَزْنِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ (98)

(QS. Yunus: 98)

The story of the people of Prophet Yunus shows how those who initially rejected the truth eventually realized their mistakes, felt remorse, and sincerely repented to Allah. In full submission, they prayed and placed their hope in Allah, so that Allah accepted their repentance and saved them from the punishment that had been decreed.⁵⁰

Awareness of sin and human weakness leads people to realize that all glory belongs solely to Allah SWT.⁵¹ This humility distances human beings from arrogance and fosters better social relationships.

Second, repentance cultivates wisdom.

وَذَا النُّونِ إِذْ ذَهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ فَنَادَىٰ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (87) فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْعَمِّ وَكَذَلِكَ نُنْجِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (88)

(QS. Al-Anbiya': 87-88)

The story of Prophet Yunus teaches the importance of self-improvement. Initially, he left his people out of anger due to their rejection of his preaching.⁵² However, after enduring a severe trial inside the belly of the fish, he realized his mistake and, in complete submission, prayed: "*Lā ilāha illā anta subḥānaka innī kuntu mina ḍ-ḍālimīn.*" This supplication became a symbol of self-awareness, introspection, and a determination to correct one's wrongdoing. Allah accepted his repentance, saved him, and restored him to his prophetic mission.⁵³

⁴⁸Al-Zuhayli, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqīdah wa al-Sharī'ah wa al-Manhaj*, Vol 23, 141.

⁴⁹Ibn 'Āshūr, *Al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, Vol 23, 176.

⁵⁰Al-Zuhayli, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqīdah wa al-Sharī'ah wa al-Manhaj*, Vol 11, 141.

⁵¹Al-Rāzī, *Maḥāṭib al-Ghayb*, vol 17, 357.

⁵²Al-Rāzī, Vol 22 357. Vol?

⁵³Ibn 'Āshūr, *Al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*. Vol 17, 132. Vol?

The process of self-introspection and Prophet Yunus's spiritual experience made him more mature in dealing with life's challenges.⁵⁴ This wisdom is reflected in the ability to understand the consequences of actions and to make decisions more calmly and rationally.

Third, repentance enhances self-confidence grounded in faith and reliance upon Allah (*tawakkul*).

وَذَا التُّونِ إِذْ ذَهَبَ مُغَاضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ فَنَادَى فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ (87) فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْغَمِّ وَكَذَلِكَ نُنَجِّي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (88)

(QS. Al-Anbiya': 87-88)

Repentance accompanied by self-improvement not only purifies the soul but also enhances self-confidence in facing life. True self-confidence is not arrogance or a sense of superiority, but rather arises from deep faith in Allah and sincere reliance upon Him (*tawakkul*). A person who sincerely repents realizes that past mistakes are not the end, but valuable lessons that make them stronger, more aware, and better prepared to face life's challenges.⁵⁵ As stated in the words of Allah: "And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely upon Him." (QS. Ali Imran: 159).

A person who sincerely repents has the conviction that Allah SWT always opens the path of improvement for His servants.⁵⁶ Such self-confidence does not stem from arrogance, but from a strong spiritual conviction in Allah.

Fourth, repentance influences emotional balance.

فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُنْ كَصَاحِبِ الْخُوْتِ إِذْ نَادَى وَهُوَ مَكْظُومٌ (48) لَوْلَا أَنْ تَدَارَكَهُ نِعْمَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِ لَنُبِذَ بِالْعَرَاءِ وَهُوَ مَذْمُومٌ (49) فَاجْتَبَاهُ رَبُّهُ فَجَعَلَهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ (50)

(Al-Qur'an Al-Karim, QS. Al-Qalam: 48-50)

This verse teaches the importance of patience as part of the spiritual journey and self-improvement. Prophet Yunus initially did not show patience in dealing with his people, which led him to leave them in a state of anger. As a test, Allah placed him in a great hardship by causing him to be swallowed by a fish. However, after realizing his mistake and sincerely repenting, Allah forgave him, saved him, and restored him as a righteous servant. This demonstrates that patience is a key element in facing life's trials and a form of submission to the wisdom and decree of Allah.⁵⁷

The patience taught in the story of Prophet Yunus helps humans control anger, face life's pressures calmly, and make decisions wisely.⁵⁸ Thus, repentance functions as a means of strengthening both emotional and spiritual well-being.

Fifth, repentance fosters optimism.

⁵⁴HAMKA, *Tafsir Al-Azhar* (Jakarta: Pusat Panjimas, 1983), 68, 6126.

⁵⁵Aya Mamlu'ah, "Konsep Percaya Diri dalam al-Qur'an Surat Ali Imran Ayat 139," *Al-Aufa: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kajian Keislaman* 1, 1 (2019), 36-37.

⁵⁶Al-Abrashi, *Al-Shakhshiyyah*, 134.

⁵⁷Ibn 'Ashūr, *Al-Tahrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, vol 29, 104.

⁵⁸Al-Abrashi, *Al-Shakhshiyyah*, 139.

وَإِنَّ يُونُسَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ (139) إِذْ أَبَقَ إِلَى الْفُلْكِ الْمَشْحُونِ (140) فَسَاهَمَ فَكَانَ مِنَ الْمُدْحَضِينَ (141) فَالْتَقَمَهُ الْحُوتُ وَهُوَ مُلِيمٌ (142) فَلَوْلَا أَنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُسَبِّحِينَ (143) لَلَبِثَ فِي بَطْنِهِ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ (144). فَنَبَذْنَاهُ بِالْعَرَاءِ وَهُوَ سَقِيمٌ (145) وَأَنْبَتْنَا عَلَيْهِ شَجَرَةً مِنْ يَقْطِينٍ (146) وَأَرْسَلْنَاهُ إِلَى مِائَةِ أَلْفٍ أَوْ يَزِيدُونَ (147) فَأَمَنُوا فَمَتَّعْنَاهُمْ إِلَى حِينٍ (148)

(QS. Ash-Shaffat: 139-148)

These verses show that one of the keys to Prophet Yunus's salvation was *tasbih* and supplication filled with hope in Allah. In the depths of hardship and the darkness of the fish's belly, he did not despair, but instead increased his remembrance of Allah and sought His forgiveness. This teaches us that remembering Allah in every circumstance, especially during difficulties, is the key to salvation and divine assistance.⁵⁹ In the context of human life, this serves as an important lesson to always maintain positive thinking and optimism in facing various challenges.

Prophet Yunus continued to glorify Allah and supplicate to Him even while in the most difficult situation inside the belly of the fish. This attitude demonstrates that a believer should never despair of Allah's mercy.⁶⁰ Optimism rooted in faith makes a person stronger in facing life's challenges and fosters a positive expectation of Allah SWT's assistance.

Thus, the findings of this study indicate that repentance in the story of Prophet Yunus is not only a theological concept but also has a comprehensive impact on the formation of human character. Repentance serves as a means of spiritual reform that is capable of building individuals who are humble, wise, self-confident, emotionally stable, and optimistic in living their lives.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the story of Prophet Yunus in the Qur'an presents a comprehensive concept of repentance that encompasses both spiritual and character-building dimensions. Based on an analysis of Qur'anic verses and the interpretations of Muslim exegetes, the essence of repentance in the story of Prophet Yunus consists of five interrelated aspects: remorse, self-improvement, patience, glorification of Allah through *tasbīh*, and seeking help from Allah SWT. These aspects indicate that repentance in Islam is not merely an act of seeking forgiveness, but a continuous process of self-reformation that transforms individuals spiritually, emotionally, and socially.

The findings further reveal that these dimensions of repentance contribute to the formation of positive human character traits. Remorse encourages humility through self-awareness and self-introspection, while self-improvement fosters wisdom in responding to life's challenges. Faith and reliance upon Allah strengthen self-confidence, patience promotes emotional balance, and *tasbīh*

⁵⁹Al-Zuhayli, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr fī al-'Aqīdah wa al-Sharī'ah wa al-Manhaj*, vol 23, 143.

⁶⁰Muhammad Isa Anshory and Muhammad Syarifudin Hafid, "Sikap Optimisme Para Nabi dalam Al-Qur'an," *Jurnal Al-Mubarak: Jurnal Kajian Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* 7, 2 (2022): 77–96, <https://doi.org/10.47435/al-mubarak.v7i2.1240>.

nurtures optimism and resilience in facing difficulties. Therefore, repentance may be understood as a transformative spiritual mechanism that shapes character and supports personal growth.

This study contributes to the development of thematic Qur'ānic exegesis by integrating the concept of repentance with human character formation from a Qur'ānic perspective. It highlights the practical relevance of Qur'ānic narratives in addressing contemporary moral, spiritual, and psychological challenges. The story of Prophet Yunus, therefore, offers not only theological lessons but also educational and therapeutic values that can guide individuals toward moral and spiritual development.

Nevertheless, this research is limited to a library-based analysis of Qur'ānic verses and classical as well as contemporary exegetical sources. As a result, the relationship between repentance and character formation proposed in this study has not been empirically tested in actual educational or social contexts. Future studies may employ quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method approaches to examine whether structured *tawbah* practices contribute to measurable improvements in emotional regulation, psychological well-being, and character development among Muslim communities, particularly among *santri* in Islamic boarding schools. Further research may also explore other prophetic narratives in the Qur'ān to develop broader models of character formation and spiritual therapy grounded in Qur'ānic teachings.

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