

The Evolution of the Meaning of Barakah in the Tafsir of Al-Tabari and Sayyid Qutb: A Comparative Contextual Analysis

Najah Umniyati¹, Budimansyah², Masruchin³

Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung¹²³

E-mail: najahumniyati4@gmail.com¹, budi@radenintan.ac.id²,
masruchin80@radenintan.ac.id³

Abstract

The abstract This article investigates the evolution of the concept of barakah in the Qur'anic exegesis of al-Ṭabarī and Sayyid Qutb through a comparative-contextual analysis. Using a qualitative descriptive design, the study examines selected passages from Jāmi' al-Bayān and Fī Ṣilāl al-Qur'ān alongside the socio-historical circumstances that shaped both exegetes' thought. The analysis demonstrates that al-Ṭabarī conceptualizes barakah primarily within a textual-traditional framework, emphasizing transmitted reports and philological precision that foreground material and spiritual beneficence in an agrarian society. By contrast, Sayyid Qutb articulates barakah as a dynamic, transformative force that structures individual piety, social ethics, and civilizational struggle in response to colonialism, secularism, and political oppression. The study argues that the shift from a predominantly riwāyah-based to a more ideologically and socially engaged reading reflects a broader movement from classical to modern Qur'anic hermeneutics. These findings enrich thematic tafsir studies and offer a conceptual basis for reinterpreting barakah in contemporary discourses on spirituality, social justice, and sustainable development.

Keywords: Barakah; al-Ṭabarī; Sayyid Qutb; Comparative Qur'anic Exegesis; Contextual Interpretation.

Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji evolusi konsep barakah dalam tafsir al-Ṭabarī dan Sayyid Qutb melalui analisis komparatif-kontekstual. Dengan menggunakan desain kualitatif deskriptif, penelitian ini menelaah sejumlah bagian terpilih dari Jāmi' al-Bayān dan Fī Ṣilāl al-Qur'ān secara berdampingan dengan konteks sosial-historis yang membentuk pemikiran kedua mufasir tersebut. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa al-Ṭabarī memaknai barakah terutama dalam bingkai tekstual-tradisional dengan penekanan pada riwayat dan ketelitian filologis yang menonjolkan dimensi kemaslahatan material dan spiritual dalam masyarakat agraris. Sebaliknya, Sayyid Qutb mengartikulasikan barakah sebagai kekuatan dinamis dan transformatif yang mengatur kesalehan individu, etika sosial, dan perjuangan peradaban dalam menghadapi kolonialisme, sekularisme, dan represi politik. Penelitian ini berargumen bahwa pergeseran dari pembacaan yang dominan berbasis riwāyah menuju pembacaan yang lebih ideologis dan sosial-engaged mencerminkan gerak lebih luas dari hermeneutika Qur'ani klasik ke modern. Temuan tersebut memperkaya kajian tafsir tematik dan menawarkan landasan konseptual untuk menafsirkan ulang barakah dalam wacana kontemporer tentang spiritualitas, keadilan sosial, dan pembangunan berkelanjutan.

Kata kunci: Barakah; Tafsir al-Ṭabarī; Tafsir Sayyid Qutb; Tafsir Komparatif; Penafsiran Kontekstual.

Introduction

The Qur'anic concept of *barakah* occupies a pivotal place at the intersection of theology, language, and lived religious practice. Contemporary Qur'anic studies increasingly describe *barakah* not merely as "good fortune," but as a divinely mediated surplus of goodness qualitative and quantitative that stabilizes, prolongs, and deepens benefit in human life.¹ Within this discourse, *barakah* is framed as a dynamic category that links divine grace to concrete historical, social, and ethical realities, rather than remaining a purely mystical or abstract notion.²

Recent scholarship has shown that *barakah* functions as a key idiom in everyday Muslim religiosity. Ethnographic work illustrates how believers interpret health, sustenance, family relations, and moral comportment as sites in which *barakah* is sought, experienced, and negotiated.³ In the context of Islamic boarding schools and other traditional institutions, *barakah* is closely associated with practices of service (*khidmah*), obedience to teachers, and participation in ritual life, which are understood as channels for accessing the esoteric or spiritual dimension of Islamic education.⁴

These findings underscore that *barakah* is both a theological concept and a social resource, shaping motivation, authority, and institutional cultures.

At the level of Qur'anic interpretation, however, studies of *barakah* remain unevenly distributed. A number of recent contributions map its semantic fields and Qur'anic usages, classifying verses of *barakah* across the domains of space, time, revelation, lineage, and socio-economic life.⁵ Yet much of this work either treats *barakah* thematically without closely engaging particular tafsir traditions, or focuses on contemporary ethnographic contexts without systematically relating them to classical exegetical frameworks.⁶ As a result, the historical evolution of *barakah* as interpreted conceptually within the tafsir canon has not been sufficiently articulated.

This lacuna is especially visible when one considers the epistemic distance between classical and modern exegetes. On the one hand, al-Ṭabarī's *Jāmi' al-Bayān* is widely recognized as a foundational classical tafsir, characterized by meticulous attention to isnād, philology, and early interpretive authorities. Recent work on al-Ṭabarī highlights the tension between his theoretical commitment to *tafsir bi-al-riwāyah* and his occasional reliance on ijtihādīc reasoning in contested issues, such

¹ Serdar DEMİREL and Hikmatullah Babu SAHİB, "Concept of Barakah in Qur'ān and Sunnah: Towards Its Realization in Modern Discourse," *FSM İlmî Araştırmalar İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Dergisi*, no. 5 (June 30, 2015): 261–284, <http://dergipark.gov.tr/doi/10.16947/fsmiad.2440>.

² Serdar DEMİREL and Hikmatullah Babu SAHİB, "Concept of Barakah in Qur'ān and Sunnah: Towards Its Realization in Modern Discourse," *FSM İlmî Araştırmalar İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Dergisi* 6, no. 5 (June 30, 2015): 123–145, <http://dergipark.gov.tr/doi/10.16947/fsmiad.2440>.

³ Jennifer M Edmonds, "Smelling Baraka: Everyday Islam and Islamic Normativity," *American Journal of Islam and Society* 36, no. 3 (2019): 21–48, <https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v36i3.193>.

⁴ Agus Riwanda, Mukhammad Zamzami, and Abdullah Hosseinienskandian, "Exploring The Esoteric Dimension Of Islamic Education Through Khidmah Students' Motivation," *Penamas* 36, no. 2 (November 30, 2023): 217–231, <https://penamas.kemenag.go.id/index.php/penam>

as/article/view/652; F Kutsiyah, "Social Capital and Its Transformations in Sidogiri Islamic Boarding School," *KARSA: Journal of Social and Islamic Culture* 28, no. 1 (2020): 71–96.

⁵ Khalid El-Awaisi, "The Understandings Of Barakah From The Qur'an: A Study Of Five Of Its Categories," *Al-Turath Journal of al-Quran and al-Sunnah* 7, no. 2 (December 31, 2022): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.17576/turath-2022-0702-01>; DEMİREL and SAHİB, "Concept of Barakah in Qur'ān and Sunnah: Towards Its Realization in Modern Discourse."

⁶ Riwanda, Mukhammad Zamzami, and Abdullah Hosseinienskandian, "Exploring The Esoteric Dimension Of Islamic Education Through Khidmah Students' Motivation"; Edmonds, "Smelling Baraka: Everyday Islam and Islamic Normativity."

as the status of the *basmalah* in Sūrat al-Fātiḥah.⁷ This tension suggests that even within a “traditionist” framework, semantic and doctrinal concepts *barakah* among them are not simply transmitted but also negotiated.

On the other hand, modern readings of the Qur’an increasingly emphasize contextual, ethical, and socio-political dimensions of revelation. Contextualist hermeneutics argue that the Qur’an must be interpreted through a sustained dialogue between its historical horizon and contemporary moral challenges.⁸ Within this broader trend, Sayyid Quṭb’s *Fī Ṣilāl al-Qur’ān* occupies a central place. Recent Indonesian and international scholarship describes Quṭb’s tafsīr as methodologically *tahlīlī*, shaped by an *adabī-ijtimā’ī* and *harakī* (activist) orientation that seeks to translate Qur’anic guidance into a comprehensive program for social transformation.⁹ Studies of Quṭb’s work also show that his interpretive project is deeply intertwined with debates on religious moderation, political order, and

the ethical reconstruction of Muslim societies.¹⁰

Despite these advances, there is still limited research that systematically compares how a classical authority such as al-Ṭabarī and a modern ideologue-exegete such as Sayyid Quṭb construe a central Qur’anic concept like *barakah*. Existing studies either focus on methodological typologies of tafsīr such as the distinction between *tafsīr bi-al-ma’thūr* and *tafsīr bi-al-ra’y* or examine Quṭb’s socio-political ideas without tracing their implications for specific theological-semantic categories.¹¹ Consequently, the diachronic development of *barakah* across classical and modern tafsīr remains under-explored.

Against this backdrop, the present study aims to analyze the evolution of the meaning of *barakah* in al-Ṭabarī’s *Jāmi’ al-Bayān* and Sayyid Quṭb’s *Fī Ṣilāl al-Qur’ān* through a comparative and contextual approach. Specifically, it seeks (1) to describe how each mufasssīr conceptualizes *barakah* in selected Qur’anic verses; (2) to examine how their respective exegetical methods and socio-historical contexts shape these conceptualizations; and (3) to synthesize the implications of their interpretations for contemporary spiritual and socio-ethical discourses. Methodologically, the study employs qualitative textual analysis of primary tafsīr passages, supported by secondary literature on Qur’anic hermeneutics and

⁷ Abd Muin et al., “Imam Al-Ṭabarī’s Analysis of the Polemic Position of Basmala in Surah Al-Fatihah: A Study of Paradoxical Views,” *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 33, no. 1 (June 2, 2025): 156, <https://ejournal.uin-suska.ac.id/index.php/ushuludin/article/view/36041>.

⁸ Muhammad K Ridwan, “The Reflective-Accommodative Approach to the Quran: Ahmad Syafii Maarif’s Contribution towards Contemporary Approach to the Quran,” *Ullumuna* 25, no. 1 (July 31, 2021): 199–227, <https://ulumuna.or.id/index.php/ujs/article/view/432>.

⁹ Muhamad Yoga Firdaus and Eni Zulaiha, “Kajian Metodologis Kitab Tafsir Fi Zhilalil Al-Qur’an Karya Sayyid Qutb,” *Reslaj: Religion Education Social Laa Roiba Journal* 5, no. 6 (December 26, 2022): 2717–2730, <https://journal.laaroiiba.ac.id/index.php/reslaj/article/view/2553>; M Lestari and S Vera, “Metodologi Tafsir Fi Zhilal Al-Qur’an Sayyid Qutb,” *Jurnal Iman dan Spiritualitas* 1, no. 1 (2021): 47–54.

¹⁰ Ahmad Syukron et al., “The Relationship Between Islam and the State in the Qur’an: Sayyid Qutb’s Perspective on Islamic Political Governance,” *QOF* 8, no. 2 (December 20, 2024): 285–300, <https://jurnalfuda.iainkediri.ac.id/index.php/qof/article/view/2887>; Mohammad Fauzan Fathollah et al., “Religious Moderation In Sayyid Quṭb’s Tafsir,” *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 33, no. 1 (June 1, 2025): 62, <https://doi.org/10.24014/jush.v33i1.35862>.

¹¹ Muhamad Yoga Firdaus and Eni Zulaiha, “Kajian Metodologis Kitab Tafsir Fi Zhilalil Al-Qur’an Karya Sayyid Qutb,” *Reslaj: Religion Education Social Laa Roiba Journal* 5, no. 6 (December 26, 2022): 2717–2730, <https://doi.org/10.47467/reslaj.v5i6.2553>.

modern contextual approaches.¹² Through this design, the article situates *barakah* as a dynamic concept whose meaning is progressively re-articulated between classical philological-riwāyī exegesis and modern socio-ideological tafsīr.

Literature Review

Scholarly engagement with the Qur'anic concept of *barakah* has developed along at least three main trajectories: semantic-theological analyses of Qur'anic usage, studies of *barakah* in lived religious practice, and works on exegetical methodology that indirectly frame how *barakah* is interpreted. Seminal semantic studies such as Demirel and Sahib conceptualize *barakah* as a divine blessing that combines durability (*tsubūt*) and the incremental increase of goodness in both material and spiritual registers.¹³ Building on this, El-Awaisi maps five major Qur'anic categories of *barakah* pertaining to space, time, scripture, persons, and provision showing that the term operates as a nodal concept linking cosmology, ethics, and communal life rather than a

merely pietistic slogan.¹⁴ These studies, however, largely remain at the level of lexical and semantic systematization and do not yet offer a sustained comparison between classical and modern tafsīr traditions.

Recent works have increasingly situated *barakah* within broader discussions of Muslim sociality and religious habitus. Research on pesantren and Islamic educational spaces, for instance, highlights how the grammar of *barakah* structures relations of authority, aspiration, and moral formation. Kutsiyah shows that social capital in Sidogiri pesantren is deeply embedded in narratives of lineage, piety, and blessing, where *barakah* becomes a symbolic resource that legitimizes kyai authority and institutional continuity.¹⁵ Similarly, Riwanda, Zamzami, and Hosseini Eskandian demonstrate that student motivation in traditional Islamic education is often framed in terms of *khidmah* and the hope of receiving *barakah* from teachers, suggesting that the concept functions as a powerful motivator for ethical self-discipline rather than a purely metaphysical notion. Yet these sociological accounts generally treat *barakah* as an operative symbol in practice, without tracing in detail how its Qur'anic semantics are constructed and transformed within specific exegetical corpora.¹⁶

A second cluster of scholarship focuses on the evolution of Qur'anic hermeneutics and tafsīr methodology. Studies of exegetical typologies frequently distinguish between tafsīr *bi al-ma'thūr*

¹² DEMİREL and SAHİB, "Concept of Barakah in Qur'an and Sunnah: Towards Its Realization in Modern Discourse"; Maizuddin Maizuddin and Zulihafnani Zulihafnani, "Progresive Qur'Anic Studies in Indonesian State Islamic Higher Education (2014-2019): Implementation and Development," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 22, no. 1 (2021): 113-136; El-Awaisi, "The Understandings Of Barakah From The Qur'an: A Study Of Five Of Its Categories"; M. Sufian et al., "Listening and Vocabulary Gains via Arabic Song Media: A Two-Cycle Classroom Study in Grade X," *Jurnal Pustaka Indonesia Indonesia* 3, no. 1 (2023): 32-42; Erlina Erlina, Koderi Koderi, and Muhammad Sufian, "Designing A Gender-Responsive Qira'ah Learning Module: Bridging Equality And Inclusivity In Islamic Higher Education," *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura* 25, no. 1 (February 6, 2025): 239-262, <https://jurnal.ar-raniry.ac.id/index.php/islamfutura/article/view/29305>.

¹³ DEMİREL and SAHİB, "Concept of Barakah in Qur'an and Sunnah: Towards Its Realization in Modern Discourse."

¹⁴ El-Awaisi, "The Understandings Of Barakah From The Qur'an: A Study Of Five Of Its Categories."

¹⁵ Kutsiyah, "Social Capital and Its Transformations in Sidogiri Islamic Boarding School."

¹⁶ Riwanda, Mukhammad Zamzami, and Abdullah Hosseini Eskandian, "Exploring The Esoteric Dimension Of Islamic Education Through Khidmah Students' Motivation."

(report-based) and *tafsīr bi al-ra'y* (reason-based), as well as between *taḥlīlī*, *ijmālī*, and *mawḍū'ī* methods, but often remain at the level of taxonomic description. Nirwana and colleagues (2024) argue that contemporary Qur'an research increasingly hybridizes these typologies, combining classical philological rigor with thematic and contextual approaches that seek to respond to current ethical and social problems. Muin et al., through their study of al-Ṭabarī's analysis of the *basmalah*, illustrate how a seemingly technical legal-ritual debate actually reveals deeper assumptions about textual authority, consensus, and the limits of interpretive plurality in classical *tafsīr*.¹⁷ Nevertheless, these works rarely take *barakah* itself as a focal category, so the implications of methodological choices for the concept's semantic development remain underexplored.

Within this broader hermeneutical landscape, contextualist approaches have become particularly influential. Saeed and Akbar systematically defend a "contextualist" hermeneutic that insists Qur'anic interpretation must involve an ongoing dialogue between the text's original socio-historical horizon and contemporary moral challenges, especially in ethico-legal domains.¹⁸ Ichwan and Salisu further argue, in their comparative analysis of classical *tafsīr* and modern hermeneutics, that contemporary Muslim exegetes increasingly negotiate between inherited interpretive authorities and new theoretical tools in order to address issues of justice, pluralism, and human rights.¹⁹

¹⁷ Muin et al., "Imam Al-Ṭabarī's Analysis of the Polemic Position of Basmala in Surah Al-Fatihah: A Study of Paradoxical Views."

¹⁸ Abdullah Saeed and Ali Akbar, "Contextualist Approaches and the Interpretation of the Qur'ān," *Religions* 12, no. 7 (July 13, 2021): 527, <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/12/7/527>.

¹⁹ M N Ichwan and A Salisu, "Reevaluating Qur'anic Hermeneutics: A Comparative Analysis

Hatta applies this contextualist framework specifically to Abdullah Saeed's reinterpretation of Qur'anic norms, showing how stages of textual engagement, critical analysis, historical reconstruction, and contemporary application can yield more dynamic readings without abandoning the text's normative force.²⁰ Yet, while these studies clarify the epistemological and methodological premises of contextualist hermeneutics, they do not systematically track how a specific concept such as *barakah* is re-signified across different exegetical projects.

Specific attention to individual *mufasssīrīn* has generated another important strand of literature. On al-Ṭabarī, recent work underscores his central role in consolidating report-based *tafsīr* and in shaping later exegetical discourse. Muin et al. show that al-Ṭabarī's careful negotiation of competing reports and legal positions is not merely compilatory but reflects a coherent interpretive project that privileges *isnād*, early community consensus, and linguistic precision.²¹ However, contemporary studies on al-Ṭabarī tend to highlight his methodology or specific legal-theological debates rather than systematically mapping his conceptualization of *barakah* across the Qur'anic corpus.

By contrast, scholarship on Sayyid Quṭb has been dominated by analyses of his political theology and revolutionary ethics. Methodological studies by Lestari and Vera and Firdaus and Zulaiha identify

between Classical Tafsir and Modern Hermeneutical Approaches," *Kalam* 18, no. 2 (2024): 107-126.

²⁰ Muhammad Hatta, "Abdullah Saeed's Contextual Restructures of The Qur'an," *International Journal of Islamic Thought and Humanities* 2, no. 1 (March 1, 2023): 47-55, <https://journal.staitaruna.ac.id/index.php/ijith/article/view/56>.

²¹ Muin et al., "Imam Al-Ṭabarī's Analysis of the Polemic Position of Basmala in Surah Al-Fatihah: A Study of Paradoxical Views."

Fi Zilāl al-Qurʾān as exemplifying an *adabī-ijtimaʿī* and movement-oriented tafsīr, in which literary sensitivity and socio-political critique are tightly intertwined. More recent work has turned to Qutb's contribution to discourses on religious moderation and socio-ethical reform.²² Fathollah et al. demonstrate how Qutb's reading of key *wasatiyyah* and *islāh* verses can be mobilized for contemporary debates on moderation and extremism, suggesting a more nuanced reception of his legacy than the stereotype of unidimensional radicalism implies.²³ At the same time, studies of Qutb's Islamism and the doctrine of *ḥākimiyyah* show how his Qurʾanic hermeneutics are inseparable from broader arguments about sovereignty, social justice, and the moral reconstruction of Muslim societies.

Existing research, however, reveals two notable gaps. First, barakah-focused studies either offer macro-semantic syntheses or ethnographic accounts of lived practice, but they seldom conduct a close comparative reading of how *barakah* is construed within specific tafsīr works that represent different hermeneutical paradigms. Second, tafsīr-methodological and Qutb-centered studies tend to prioritize typological classification (e.g., *bi al-maʿthūr* vs. *bi al-raʾy*, classical vs. contextualist) or to foreground Qutb's socio-political project without tracing their implications for particular theological-semantic categories such as *barakah*. Consequently, we still lack a systematic account of how the meaning of *barakah* evolves when a classical exegete such as al-Ṭabarī, rooted in early report-based traditions, is placed in direct conversation

with a modern, movement-oriented exegete like Sayyid Qutb operating within a contextualist and activist horizon.

The present study seeks to address these gaps by offering a comparative-contextual analysis of *barakah* in Jāmiʿ al-Bayān and *Fi Zilāl al-Qurʾān*. By correlating each mufasssīr's methodological commitments and socio-historical context with their concrete reading of key *barakah* verses, this research aims to illuminate the ways in which a single Qurʾanic concept can function as a bridge between classical textual theology and modern projects of spiritual-social transformation.

Results and Discussion

1. The Concept of *Barakah* in the Qurʾan

From an etymological perspective, the word *barakah* (البركة) derives from the trilateral root (ب ر ك), which conveys the meanings of *tsubūt* (stability, being firmly established), *ziyādah* (increase), and *khair* (goodness) (Ibn Manzūr, 1993). Ibn Fāris in *Maqāyīs al-Lughah* affirms that this root carries the sense of “the stability of something” and “the increase of goodness” (Ibn Faris, 1979). In Arabic usage, *al-birkah* also denotes a pool or basin of water that settles in a particular place and from which life can grow and flourish (Al Zabidi, 1994).

Al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī defines *barakah* as *tsubūt al-khair al-ilāhī fī shayʿ*, that is, the permanence of divine goodness in something (Al Raghīb Al Asfahani, 2006). Likewise, Ibn Manzūr in *Lisān al-ʿArab* explains *barakah* as *al-namāʾ wa al-ziyādah* (growth and increase of goodness) (Ibn Manzūr, 1993).

Thus, terminologically within a Qurʾanic context, *barakah* is understood as the outpouring of Allah's grace that is enduring, increasing, and widely beneficial whether in material, spiritual, or social forms (M. Quraish Shihab, 1996).

²² Firdaus and Zulaiha, “Kajian Metodologis Kitab Tafsir Fi Zhalalil Al-Qurʾan Karya Sayyid Qutb”; Lestari and Vera, “Metodologi Tafsir Fi Zhalal Al-Qurʾan Sayyid Qutb.”

²³ Fathollah et al., “Religious Moderation In Sayyid Qutb's Tafsir.”

The Qur'an mentions *barakah* and its derivations in a variety of contexts. Classical and modern exegetes typically group the relevant verses into several major categories: *barakah* in relation to

place, time, revelation (the Qur'an), human beings and their descendants, and sustenance or social life. The main verses discussed in this section can be summarised as follows.

Table 1. Selected Qur'anic Verses on *Barakah*

Category	Reference	Arabic Text	English Translation	Exegetical Note
<i>Barakah</i> in place (land/earth)	Al-Anbiyā' 21:71	وَجَعَلْنَاهُ لُوطًا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا لِلْعَالَمِينَ	"And We delivered him and Lot to the land which We had blessed for the worlds."	Al-Ṭabarī interprets this as the land of Shām (Palestine and its surroundings), blessed with fertility, water, and the sending of many prophets. ²⁴
<i>Barakah</i> in place (land/earth)	Al-A'rāf 7:137	وَأَوْزَنَّا الْقَوْمَ الَّذِينَ كَانُوا يُسْتَظْعَمُونَ مَسَارِقَ الْأَرْضِ وَمَعَارِبَهَا الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا	"And We made the people who had been oppressed inherit the eastern and western parts of the land which We had blessed."	Al-Qurtubī notes that this blessing includes natural wealth and the land's strategic role in the history of civilisation. ²⁵
<i>Barakah</i> in time	Ad-Dukhān 44:3	إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ فِي لَيْلَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ إِنَّا كُنَّا مُنذِرِينَ	"Indeed, We sent it down during a blessed night. Indeed, We were to warn [mankind]."	Most exegetes identify this "blessed night" with Laylat al-Qadr; its blessing lies in the revelation of the Qur'an and the outpouring of divine mercy. ²⁶
<i>Barakah</i> in revelation (the Qur'an)	Ṣād 38:29	كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ	"This is a blessed Book which We have revealed to you so that they might ponder its verses and that those of	Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī emphasises that the Qur'an's blessing lies in the permanence of its guidance, its comprehensiveness

²⁴ Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *Jami' Al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil Ay Al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risalah, 2000); Ismail ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-'Azim*, vol. 4 (Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1998).

²⁵ Abu Abdillah al-Qurtubī, *Al-Jāmi' Li-Aḥkām Al-Qur'ān*, vol. 8 (Dar al-Hadith, 2006).

²⁶ Ibid.

			understanding would be reminded."	, and its capacity to provide solutions for every age. ²⁷
Barakah in human beings/lineage	Ash-Şaffāt 37:113	وَبَارَكْنَا عَلَيْهِ وَعَلَىٰ إِسْحَاقَ ۚ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا مُحْسِنٌ وَظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ مُبِينٌ	"And We blessed him and Isaac. But among their descendants is the doer of good and the clearly unjust to himself."	Al-Ṭabrisī states that this blessing refers to the continuity of prophethood and the emergence of descendants who carry revelation and goodness. ²⁸
Barakah in human beings	Maryam 19:31	وَجَعَلَنِي مُبَارَكًا أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُ وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا	"And He has made me blessed wherever I may be, and He has enjoined upon me prayer and zakat as long as I live."	Al-Qurṭubī explains that the blessing of Prophet 'Īsā lies in the benefit he brings to people through his teachings, supplications, and exemplary conduct. ²⁹
Barakah in sustenance & social life	Al-A'rāf 7:96	وَلَوْ أَنَّ أَهْلَ الْقُرَىٰ آمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا لَفَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَرَكَاتٍ مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَٰكِن كَذَّبُوا فَأَخَذْنَا هُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ	"And if only the people of the cities had believed and feared Allah, We would have opened for them blessings from the heaven and the earth; but they denied, so We seized them for what they used to earn."	Sayyid Qutb ³⁰ interprets this verse as articulating a social principle: faith and piety constitute the foundation of a prosperous, harmonious, and blessed society, spiritually and materially.

²⁷ Fakhr al Din al Razi, *Maḥatib al-Ghayb*, vol. 26 (Dar Ihya al-Turath al-'Arabi, 1999).

²⁸ Al Tabrisi, *Majma' Al-Bayan Fi Tafsir Al-Qur'an*, vol. 7 (Dar al-Ma'rifah, 1995).

²⁹ al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' Li-Aḥkām Al-Qur'ān*, vol. 8, p. .

³⁰ Sayyid Qutb, *Fi Zilal Al-Qur'an*, vol. 3 (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 2003).

From this mapping, it may be concluded that the Qur'anic concept of *barakah* spans space (place), time, revelation, human beings, and social life. The essence of *barakah* is not merely quantitative increase but qualitative benefit that generates goodness, tranquillity, and continuity in life.

2. The Meaning of *Barakah* in al-Ṭabarī's Tafsir

Imām Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 H/923 CE) is one of the foremost early Muslim exegetes. His monumental work *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān* is widely recognised as an encyclopaedic tafsīr *bi al-riwāyah*, compiling the opinions of Companions and Successors, Arabic linguistic analysis, and variant readings.³¹ Contemporary studies affirm that al-Ṭabarī's method skilfully combines the authority of chains of transmission (*sanad*) with philological precision, thereby laying a crucial foundation for later tafsīr scholarship.³²

Linguistically, *barakah* derives from the root *b-r-k*, connoting stability, continuity, and increase. Al-Ṭabarī stresses that the meaning of *barakah* in Qur'anic verses is "the increase of goodness and the endurance of benefit" granted by Allah to His servants.³³ Numerous reports present *barakah* as a divine outpouring of bounty that yields *maṣlahah* (benefit), whether in the form of rainfall, provision, offspring, or the continuity of life.

In his actual exegesis, al-Ṭabarī approaches verses of *barakah* through transmitted reports. For example, in interpreting Al-A'rāf 7:96 on blessings from heaven and earth conditioned on faith and piety, he cites reports that gloss *barakāt* as rain from the sky and fertility of the earth.³⁴ Thus, *barakah* is not merely a spiritual abstraction but manifests concretely as material well-being. Likewise, concerning Maryam 19:31, al-Ṭabarī understands the blessedness of 'Īsā as the constant benefit he brings through *da'wah*, revealed law, and the model of righteous deeds.

Al-Ṭabarī's interpretation therefore exhibits two intertwined dimensions. First, the material dimension, in which *barakah* appears as rain, abundant harvests, health, and progeny. Second, the spiritual dimension, where *barakah* signifies divine *tawfiq*, guidance, and the continuity of righteous action. Nonetheless, his tafsīr tends to emphasise the material aspect, in line with the agrarian context of his time, when communities were heavily dependent on land, rainfall, and agriculture.³⁵

This material emphasis cannot be detached from the socio-historical setting of early Islam, in which economic survival and political stability were closely tied to land and climate. Al-Ṭabarī's tafsīr demonstrates how Qur'anic discourse was grounded in and responsive to the concrete needs of that society. Recent studies argue that this shows both the social relevance of classical tafsīr and its limitations when dealing with more abstract or contemporary conceptual issues.³⁶

³¹ S Mahmood R A M Adel, "Rethinking Quranic Interpretation; Insights from Al Tabari's Classical Tafsir," *Cognizance Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies* 1, no. 1 (2025): 1–12.

³² Arik D Gunawan, "Metodologi Tafsir Klasik: Telaah Atas Tafsir Al-Tabari," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 22, no. 2 (2021): 123–140.

³³ DEMİREL and SAHİB, "Concept of Barakah in Qur'an and Sunnah: Towards Its Realization in Modern Discourse."

³⁴ Al Tabari, *Jami' Al-Bayan 'an Ta'wīl Ay Al-Qur'an*, vol. 15 (Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1992).

³⁵ T Mukhtar, "Multiplying Barakah to Waliullah: The Quranic Manifestation in a Sociological Context," *MA Journal* (2023): 45–59.

³⁶ Norzulaili Mohd Ghazali, "The Understandings of Barakah from the Qur'an: A

Modern scholarship, while recognising al-Ṭabarī's tafsīr as a vital basis for studying the evolution of the meaning of *barakah*, also highlights its limitations in addressing present-day concerns. Hence, there is a growing call for rereading his work through contextual approaches that connect *barakah* to contemporary questions of sustainability, environmental ethics, and modern spirituality.³⁷

3. The Meaning of *Barakah* in Sayyid Qutb's Tafsir

Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966) is a modernist Muslim thinker best known for his tafsīr *Fī Ṣilāl al-Qur'ān*. In contrast to classical exegetes, Qutb interprets the Qur'an through a *harakī* (movement-oriented) lens, emphasising its practical function in guiding the social, political, and spiritual life of Muslims. His tafsīr integrates personal reflection, modern historical context, and thematic analysis of Qur'anic passages. Contemporary studies describe Qutb's method as *adabī-ijtimā'ī* (literary-social) with a strongly ideological orientation, making *Fī Ṣilāl* a key reference in modern political Islam.³⁸

For Sayyid Qutb, *barakah* is not merely the increase of material bounty; it is more profoundly the outpouring of goodness that arises from total obedience to Allah and the implementation of His sharī'ah in social life.³⁹ In *Fī Ṣilāl*, he stresses that blessing is a sign of God's presence in the

life of individuals and communities, rendering their lives beneficial, ordered, and meaningful. Accordingly, *barakah* in Qutb's perspective encompasses spiritual, moral, and socio-political aspects, not only material dimensions (Yasir Suleiman, 2017).

In his interpretation of Al-A'raf 7:96, Qutb underscores the link between faith, piety, social justice, and communal welfare. The *barakāt* promised by Allah are understood as a just, harmonious, and productive social order that emerges when a community submits to God's law.⁴⁰ Regarding Maryam 19:31, Qutb interprets the blessedness of 'Īsā not merely in terms of miracles or personal virtue, but as continuous mercy and social benefit realised through his mission and struggle.⁴¹ In this way, Qutb presents *barakah* as a transformative force shaping civilisation.

Qutb's tafsīr clearly affirms that *barakah* comprises both spiritual-moral and socio-material dimensions. On the one hand, there is the blessing of faith, purity of heart, and the preservation of communal ethics. On the other hand, there is prosperity, stability, and success in collective struggle. However, unlike al-Ṭabarī, who tends to foreground material manifestations, Qutb places stronger emphasis on the normative and spiritual foundations that generate material well-being.⁴²

His interpretation is deeply influenced by the context of twentieth-century Egypt, marked by colonialism, secular

Study of Five of Its Usages," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 2 (2023): 211–230.

³⁷ Adel, "Rethinking Quranic Interpretation; Insights from Al Tabarī's Classical Tafsir."

³⁸ Muhammad Ali, "Sayyid Qutb's Interpretations: A Focus on Political Concepts," *Journal of Contemporary Islamic Studies* 15, no. 2 (2024): 55–70.

³⁹ Nabil Ibrahim, "The Essence of Tafsir Fi Zilal Al-Qur'an and Its Underlying Cultural-Linguistic and Dynamic Methods," *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science* 9, no. 3 (2025): 112–120.

⁴⁰ Fakhri Iqomul Haq, A S., and N H., "Analysis of Sayyid Qutub's Thought and Tafsir Fi Zilal Al-Qur'an in the Discipline of Tafsir Science," *Civilization Research* 7, no. 1 (2025): 44–57.

⁴¹ Siti Aminah, "The Relevance of Sayyid Qutb's Tafsir Fi Zilal Al-Qur'an in the Contemporary Era," *Al-Bunyan Journal of Islamic Studies* 3, no. 1 (2025): 77–92.

⁴² Olivier Carré, *The Quran and Its Interpreters in the Modern Muslim World* (Routledge, 2020).

nationalism, and moral crisis. In this setting, *barakah* is conceived as a civilisational solution: when society returns to Qur'anic values, Allah will bestow blessings in the form of spiritual, political, and social strength.⁴³ Modern scholarship views Qutb's tafsir as a creative response to the anxieties of his age, highlighting the dynamic relationship between scripture and social reality.⁴⁴

Despite its influence, Qutb's tafsir has also been criticised for its strong ideological colouring, which at times appears to reduce the multiplicity of Qur'anic meanings to a narrative of political struggle (Abdullah Saeed, 2016). Even so, its relevance remains significant, especially in linking *barakah* with social justice, political ethics, and the project of building a faithful community. More recent studies even advocate rereading Qutb's tafsir in a more inclusive way to enrich understandings of *barakah* in contemporary contexts such as sustainability, environmental ethics, and modern spirituality (Ismail M. al-Haddad, 2015).

4. Comparative-Contextual Analysis

A comparative-contextual approach seeks to identify points of convergence, divergence, and contemporary relevance in the thought of al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 H) and Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966 CE) regarding *barakah*. This approach does more than contrast textual interpretations; it situates each mufassir within his own socio-intellectual milieu. Thus, differences in tafsir are not viewed merely as methodological divergence but as responses to the needs of the Muslim

community in their respective eras (Ahmad Rafiq, 2019).

Both al-Ṭabarī and Sayyid Qutb agree that *barakah* originates solely from Allah as the absolute source of blessing (M. Fakhri Husein, 2021). They understand *barakah* as not only additional quantity (*ziyādah*) but also the continuity of benefit and goodness. Al-Ṭabarī foregrounds textual-linguistic aspects, referring to the root of *barakah* (abiding/settled surplus) and supporting his interpretations with reports from Companions and Successors.⁴⁵ Sayyid Qutb concurs with this basic understanding but adds spiritual (*ruḥī*) and civilisational (*ḥaḍārī*) dimensions: *barakah* is not only experienced at the individual level but also shapes communities that uphold Islamic values.⁴⁶ Both highlight obedience to Allah as the key to receiving *barakah*, as explicated for example in Al-A'raf 7:96.⁴⁷

At the same time, their tafsir exhibits significant differences in style, method, and interpretive orientation. These contrasts can be outlined as follows.

Table 2. Comparative Emphases of al-Ṭabarī and Sayyid Qutb on *Barakah*

Aspect	Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 H)	Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966 CE)
Tafsir methodology	Dominantly <i>riwāyah</i> , relying on reports from Companions and Successors, plus linguistic analysis	Dominantly <i>dirāyah</i> , based on <i>tadabbur</i> , social reflection, and the actualisation of da'wah (Eko Susilo, 2022).

⁴³ Ahmad Fauzi, "The Socio-Political Dimensions of Sayyid Qutb's Qur'anic Exegesis," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 12, no. 1 (2019): 23–41.

⁴⁴ M A Hussein, "Hermeneutics and Ideology in Sayyid Qutb's Tafsir: Reassessing Fi Zilal Al-Qur'an," *Qur'anic Studies Review* 12, no. 1 (2018): 89–106.

⁴⁵ Abd. Rahman, "Ketaatan Sebagai Jalan Keberkahan Dalam Al-Qur'an," *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 29, no. 1 (2021): 67–84.

⁴⁶ S Qutb, *Fi Zilal Al-Qur'an* (Beirut: Dar al-Shuruq, 2007).

⁴⁷ Rahman, "Ketaatan Sebagai Jalan Keberkahan Dalam Al-Qur'an."

	(Moh. Mizan, 2020).	
Orientation of meaning	<i>Barakah</i> understood as material-spiritual bounty: rain, fertility, offspring, guidance (Jamaluddin, 2020).	<i>Barakah</i> understood as the energy of faith that drives society, generating struggle and civilisational revival (Rina Oktaviani, 2021).
Socio-historical context	Early Abbasid era; agrarian society; focus on preserving classical tafsir tradition (Khaled Abou El Fadl, 2017).	Twentieth-century Egypt; colonialism and tyranny; tafsir as a response of social-political resistance (Yusuf Al Qardhawi, 2018).
Main dimension	Stronger emphasis on material dimensions, though not denying the spiritual (Ahmad Najib Burhani, 2019).	Stronger emphasis on spiritual and civilisational dimensions (Nurul Huda, 2022).
Relevance	Foundation al for semantic studies and classical tafsir (Nurudin, 2020).	Inspires contemporary readings, especially on socio-political issues and Islamic revival

		(Ahmad Khoirul Umam, 2023).
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This analysis suggests that al-Tabari's thought is particularly relevant for understanding the linguistic roots and classical authority of tafsir. His work serves as a fundamental reference in the semantic study of *barakah*.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, Sayyid Qutb's thought is more directly oriented toward addressing modern problems, notably the revival of the Muslim community amid the challenges of secularism, capitalism, and spiritual crisis.⁴⁹

Accordingly, *barakah* emerges not only as a transcendent concept but also as a historically mediated one that can be applied across eras. From an academic standpoint, the comparison shows that al-Tabari provides the textual foundation for understanding *barakah*, while Sayyid Qutb extends it into the domain of social and civilisational actualisation. Both demonstrate that *barakah* is a dynamic concept that can be reinterpreted according to the needs of the time without severing its theological roots.

Through a comparative-contextual approach, a continuity of epistemology can be discerned between classical and contemporary tafsir in explaining the relevance of *barakah* for the life of Muslim communities, from early agrarian societies to modern nations grappling with justice, sustainability, and spiritual renewal.

Conclusion

⁴⁸ M Zainal Abidin, "Telaah Semantik Konsep Barakah Dalam Tafsir Klasik," *Jurnal Studi Ushuluddin* 11, no. 2 (2021): 177-193.

⁴⁹ Rahmawati, "Konsep Barakah Dan Spirit Kebangkitan Islam," *Jurnal Pemikiran Islam Kontemporer* 8, no. 1 (2022): 55-72.

This study has examined the evolution of the meaning of *barakah* in the Qur'anic exegesis of al-Ṭabarī and Sayyid Quṭb through a comparative-contextual lens. By correlating selected verses with each mufassir's methodological commitments and socio-historical setting, the research has shown that *barakah* is neither a static lexical item nor a purely mystical notion, but a dynamic theological-semantic category whose interpretation shifts in tandem with changing hermeneutical paradigms and historical demands.

For al-Ṭabarī, *barakah* is articulated within a primarily textual-traditional framework that foregrounds *riwāyah*, *isnād*, and philological precision. His interpretation presents *barakah* as the increase and continuity of divine goodness, concretely manifested in rain, fertility, health, progeny, and the persistence of guidance in an agrarian society. While he does not negate spiritual dimensions such as *tawfiq* and *hudā*, his exegetical emphasis closely reflects the material vulnerabilities and communal concerns of early Islamic civilisation. In contrast, Sayyid Quṭb reads *barakah* through an explicitly *harakī* and *adabī-ijtimā'ī* approach. For him, *barakah* signifies a transformative energy that links individual piety to social ethics and civilisational struggle, functioning as a sign of divine presence in efforts to resist colonialism, secularism, and moral disintegration. In his tafsir, *barakah* becomes a key category for imagining a just, cohesive, and spiritually grounded social order.

Taken together, these findings indicate a diachronic movement from a predominantly *riwāyah*-based construction of *barakah* toward a more ideologically and socially engaged reading. The comparison demonstrates that both exegetes agree on the divine source and comprehensive scope of *barakah*, yet diverge in their dominant emphases: al-Ṭabarī stabilises the

concept within the grammar of classical tradition, whereas Quṭb reconfigures it as a programmatic force for contemporary reform. The urgent purpose of this research, therefore, is to show that the concept of *barakah* can serve as a bridge between classical textual theology and modern projects of spiritual renewal, social justice, and sustainable development, provided that its semantic core is re-read in light of current ethical and ecological challenges.

On the basis of these conclusions, several recommendations can be proposed. First, scholars of Qur'anic studies and tafsir are encouraged to employ similar comparative-contextual analyses for other key concepts such as *rahmah*, *'adl*, or *istiklāf* so as to trace how their meanings evolve across classical and modern exegetical corpora. Second, Islamic education practitioners can draw on the dual legacy of al-Ṭabarī and Quṭb to design curricula that integrate respect for classical authorities with a critical, socially responsive engagement with contemporary realities, especially in the domains of economic justice, environmental ethics, and governance. Third, Muslim intellectuals and policy-makers may use the reinterpreted notion of *barakah* to articulate alternative development paradigms that foreground moral integrity, communal solidarity, and ecological responsibility alongside material growth.

Future studies could extend this research in at least three directions. Comparative work may include additional mufassirīn such as al-Rāzī, al-Qurṭubī, Ibn 'Āshūr, or Nusantara exegetes to produce a more expansive genealogy of *barakah* across regions and periods. Interdisciplinary projects involving sociology, environmental studies, and development studies could further explore how exegetical constructions of *barakah*

inform contemporary Muslim responses to poverty, inequality, and climate crisis. Finally, empirical “living Qur’an” research is needed to investigate how communities today operationalise *barakah* in their economic practices, educational institutions, and civic activism, thereby testing and enriching the theoretical framework proposed in this article. Through such continuations, the study of *barakah* can continue to illuminate the dynamic interplay between revelation, interpretation, and lived Muslim experience.

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