

THE CONCEPT OF *BALĀ'* IN TAFSIR AL-BAYĀN

BY KH. SHODIQ HAMZAH

THESIS

Submitted to Ushuluddin and Humanity Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree Bachelor's In Islamic Theology

On the Department Of Qur'anic Science and Tafsir



Submitted By :

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**DEPARTMENT OF QUR'ANIC SCIENCE AND TAFSIR
FACULTY OF USHULUDDIN AND HUMANITIES
STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY WALISONGO SEMARANG**

2025

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STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY WALISONGO SEMARANG**

2025

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APPROVAL PAGE

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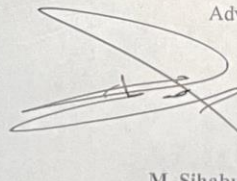
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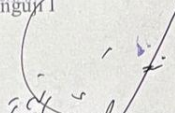
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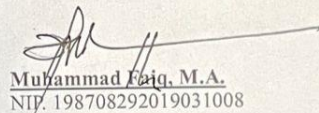

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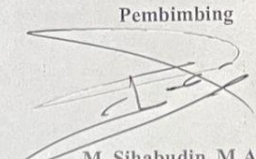

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MOTTO

إِذَا أَحَبَّ اللَّهُ قَوْمًا ابْتَلَاهُمْ

*"If Allah loves a people then they will be tested."*¹

¹Al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu'jam al-Awsaṭ*, vol. 3, 302. Dinyatakan sahih oleh Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī dalam *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaghīr*, no. 2418.

ARABIC LATIN TRANSLITERATION GUIDELINES

Transliteration is intended to transfer letters from one alphabet to another. Arabic-Latin transliteration here is the copying of Arabic letters with Latin letters, which was issued based on the joint decision of the Minister of Religious Affairs and the Minister of Education and Culture in 1987. The transliteration guidelines in this thesis are:

1. Consonants

Arabic letters	Name	Latin letters	
ا	Alif	Not symbolized	Not symbolized
ب	Ba	B	Be
ت	Ta	T	Te
ث	Sa	S	Es (with dot on top)
ج	Jim	J	Je
ح	Ha	H	Ha (with a dot below)
خ	Kha	Kh	Ka and Ha
د	Dal	D	De
ذ	Zal	Z	Zet (with dot above)
ر	Ra	R	Er
ز	Zai	Z	Zet
س	Sin	S	Es
ش	Syin	Sy	Es and Ye
ص	Sad	S	Es (with dot below)
ض	Dad	D	De (with a dot below)
ط	Ta	T	Te (with dot below)

ظ	Za	Z	Zet (with dot below)
ع	'ain	'	Inverted comma (on top)
غ	Ghain	G	Ge
ف	Fa	F	Ef
ق	Qaf	Q	Ki
ك	Kaf	K	Ks
ل	Lam	L	El
م	Mim	M	Em
ن	Nun	N	En
و	Wau	W	We
ه	Ha	H	Ha
ء	Hamza	'	Apostrophe
ي	Yes	Y	Ye

2. Vowels

Unlike the Indonesian language which recognizes two types of vowels, namely single vowels (monoftong) and double vowels (diphthong). Vowels in Arabic only have single vowels consisting of short vowels (fathah = /a/, kasrah = /i/, dhammah = /u/) and long vowels (/ā/, /ī/, and /ū/).

a. Short vowels

- /a/ is symbolized by *fathah*, for example: كَتَبَ (kataba) - meaning "he has written"
- /i/ is symbolized by *kasrah*, for example: كِتَابٌ (kitābun) - meaning "a book"
- /u/ is pronounced with a *dhammah*, for example: رُسُولٌ (rusūlun) - meaning "a messenger".

b. Long vowels

- /ā/ is written with an *alif* (ا) after *fathah*, for example: قَالَ (qāla) - meaning "he said"

- /ī/ is written with a ya' (ي) after *kasrah*, for example: كَرِيمٌ (karīm) - meaning "noble"
- /ū/ is written with a wāw (و) after the *dhammah*, for example: رَسُولٌ (rasūlun) - meaning "apostle"

3. Maddah

Maddah or long vowels whose symbols are harakat and letters, transliterated in the form of letters and signs, namely:

رَمَى: (pronounced) rama

قِيلَ: (pronounced) qila

4. Ta' Marbutah

There are two transliterations for ta' marbutah:

- Ta Marbutah is alive
Ta marbutah which is alive or gets the harakat fathah, kasrah, and dhammah, the transliteration is /t/.
- Ta marbutah dies
Ta marbutah that dies or gets a sukun harakat, transliteration is /h/.
- If the last word with ta marbutah is followed by a word that uses the article al and the reading of the two words is separated, the ta marbutah is transliterated with ha (h).

Example:

رَوْضَةُ الْاِطْفَالِ: (lit.) raudatul atfal

صَالِحَةٌ: (pronounced) Salihah

5. Syaddah (Tasydid)

In the Arabic writing system is symbolized by a sign, namely syaddah or tasydid, in transliteration the syaddah sign is symbolized by the same letter as the letter given the syaddah sign.

Example:

شَرٌّ: (pronounced) sharrun

رَبَّنَا: (pronounced) rabbana

نَزَلَ: (pronounced) nazzala

6. Leading Words

The transliteration of the article is divided into two types, namely:

- The article is followed by its sound, i.e. the letter /I/ is replaced with the same letter as the letter that directly follows the article.

Example: السماء(pronounced) assama u

- b. The article followed by a qamariyah letter
Transliterated according to its sound.

Example: الحمد لله(pronounced) alhamdulillah

7. Hamza

It was stated earlier that it is transliterated with an apostrophe, but that only applies to hamzahs located in the middle and end of words. When the hamzah is located at the beginning of a word, it is not symbolized because in Arabic writing it is an alif.

Example: اِنّ(pronounced) inna

8. Word Writing

Basically, each word, whether fi'il, isim or harf, is written separately, only certain words whose writing with Arabic letters is usually coupled with other words because there are letters or harakat that are omitted, so in this transliteration the writing of the word is also coupled with other words that follow it.

Example:

9. Capital Letters

Although the Arabic writing system does not recognize capital letters, they are used in this transliteration. The use of capital letters is like what applies in EYD, including: Capital letters are used to write the initial letters of proper names and sentence beginnings. If the proper name is preceded by a personal article, then what is written using capital letters remains the initial letter of the proper name, not the initial letter of the personal article.

10. Tajweed

This transliteration provision is inseparable from the science of tajweed.

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Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

Praise be to Allah, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful. Because of His grace, taufiq and guidance the author can complete this thesis with the title **"THE CONCEPT OF *BALĀ'* IN TAFSIR AL-BAYĀN BY KH SHODIQ HAMZAH"** prepared to fulfill one of the requirements for obtaining an undergraduate degree (S-1) Faculty of Ushuluddin and Humanities Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang.

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Semarang, June 10, 2025

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ABSTRACT

Balā' is one of the essential concepts in the Qur'an, which is often narrowly interpreted as a disaster or misfortune. In reality, the Qur'anic perspective presents *balā'* as a more comprehensive concept that includes both blessings and hardships as divine tests. In many community practices, *balā'* is still perceived as a punishment, whereas the Qur'an emphasizes that both good and bad events are trials intended to test faith, build character, and spiritually educate humans. This research seeks to question the interpretation of the concept of *balā'* through *Tafsir Al-Bayān fī Ma'rifati Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, a contemporary Javanese-language tafsir by KH. Shodiq Hamzah, which uses the *ijmālī* method and features an *adabī-ijtimā'ī* style enriched with linguistic, spiritual, and cultural dimensions. This study is qualitative in nature and employs a thematic (*maudhū'ī*) approach, examining Qur'anic verses related to the concept of *balā'* through categorized themes. Data were collected through document analysis and interpreted using content and discourse analysis to understand how the concept of trials is presented within the socio-spiritual framework of the interpretation. In *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, *balā'* is classified into two major forms: *balā'* in the form of goodness and hardship (*balā' ḥasan and balā' syarr*), and *balā'* in the form of divine commands and prohibitions (*al-amr wa al-nahy al-syar'ī*). Each category reflects a different aspect of divine testing, intended not only to challenge human endurance but also to cultivate spiritual awareness, obedience, and inner purification. The findings show two main points: first, that KH. Shodiq Hamzah sees *balā'* not just as physical pain but as a part of *tarbiyah ilāhiyyah* (divine education) that helps build moral character and brings believers closer to God; and second, that this idea is still important today, where different kinds of good and bad experiences can be seen as tests from God. This interpretation contributes to a contextual and transformative understanding of life's challenges, helping individuals respond to both adversity and prosperity as opportunities for spiritual growth, rather than viewing them solely as punishments or misfortunes.

Keywords: *Balā'*, Tafsir Al-Bayān, Tarbiyah Ilāhiyyah

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Discussion about the themes found in the Qur'an often aligns with the issues faced in each era. The selection of the theme of *balā'* in this research is based on the fact that the concept is highly relevant to the dynamics of human life throughout the ages. *Balā'*, which in Arabic means test or trial, is often narrowly understood by society as disaster, calamity, or sad events.

This interpretation has historically shaped the collective perception that one only feels tested when experiencing difficulties, such as losing wealth, falling ill, or failing. However, in the Qur'an, *balā'* is not limited to suffering alone, but also includes pleasure and all forms of gifts from Allah, which are also tests.¹ For example, wealth, status, popularity, and even health are all forms of *balā'* that test human gratitude and responsibility. Unfortunately, tests in the form of pleasure are rarely acknowledged due to their enjoyable nature and the lack of direct suffering, causing humans to tend to ignore and forget that pleasure also brings spiritual responsibility.

Blessings such as wealth, status, popularity, or health are not just gifts to be enjoyed carelessly, but also carry moral and religious consequences, such as: the rich are required to share, not be stingy or arrogant, then the healthy must be grateful for their blessings by worshiping more diligently, and the popular must maintain their behavior, because their influence on others is very significant. So, all these blessings require humans to remain obedient, grateful, and not exceed their limits.

¹Ilham, "Hakikat *Balā'* dalam Perspektif Al-Qur'an," *Muhammadiyah.or.id*, 14 Desember 2024, accessed July 7, 2025, doi: <https://muhammadiyah.or.id/2024/12/hakikat-bala-dalam-perspektif-al-quran>.

Changes in the times and advancements in technology also influence the way Muslims interpret the concept of *balā'*. In this fast-paced, digital, and competitive modern era, a person's success is often judged solely by material or social achievements, such as the number of followers on social media, business success, or academic prestige. In such conditions, many people consider achievements merely as a gift, without realizing that behind them lies a great potential for calamity namely, the temptation to be arrogant, neglect worship, or even act unjustly towards others.² On the contrary, when someone faces failure, natural disasters, or poverty, they feel that their life is being "punished" or tested by Allah. Such phenomena indicate that the public's understanding of *balā'* is still not comprehensive, as it emphasizes its negative aspects more.

In the Qur'an, *balā'* or trial is not only understood as hardship but also includes the blessings given by Allah to humans.³ This understanding is very important because many people think they are being tested only when they are in difficulty, such as when experiencing poverty, illness, loss, or other calamities. However, the Qur'an emphasizes that hardship is just one form of *balā'*, as stated in QS Al-Baqarah verse 155, where Allah says He will test humans with fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives, and fruits. This test aims to measure human patience and faith resilience, as well as to shape a stronger personality in the face of various life trials.

However, besides hardship, *balā'* can also take the form of blessings, such as abundance of sustenance, positions, or popularity.

²M. Arif Susanto, "Islam dan Teknologi: Tantangan Etika dan Adaptasi dalam Era Digital," *Al-Muharik: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 1 (2024): p.95–102. Doi: <https://journal.stitmubo.ac.id/index.php/muharik/article/view/107/118>.

³Muhammad Munawir, *Makna Balā' dalam Al-Qur'an* (Skripsi, Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, 2021), p.10–11.

These pleasures are actually also tests that are often heavier, because humans tend to be lulled and forget that these blessings are a trust from Allah that must be accounted for. QS Al-Fajr verses 15-16 mention:

فَأَمَّا الْإِنْسَانُ إِذَا مَا ابْتَلَاهُ رَبُّهُ فَأَكْرَمَهُ وَنَعَّمَهُ فَيَقُولُ رَبِّي أَكْرَمَنِ
وَأَمَّا إِذَا مَا ابْتَلَاهُ فَقَدَرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقَهُ فَيَقُولُ رَبِّي أَهَانَنِ

Meaning: As for man, when his Lord tests him and honors him and gives him comfort, he says, "My Lord has honored me." (15) But when He tests him and restricts his provision, he says, "My Lord has humiliated me." (16)⁴

QS. Al-Fajr verses 15–16 describe the psychological reality of humans when facing two contrasting life conditions: abundance and hardship. In that verse, Allah states that humans tend to judge honor and disgrace based on the abundance or lack of wealth. KH. Shodiq Hamzah in Tafsir Al-Bayān provides a distinctive and contextual explanation with a local linguistic approach. He interprets the word *ibtālā* in this verse with the Javanese term "*nyobo*" or "*nyicipi urip*," which means "to test" or "to give a taste" of life. When humans receive blessings, they think that it is a form of honor from Allah (in the language of interpretation: "*dijenengi mulya lan ditresnani*"), whereas when their sustenance is restricted, they say that Allah has humiliated them (translated: "*dijenengi awon lan ditinggal*"). KH. Shodiq emphasized that this way of thinking is incorrect, because in both conditions, the essence is that they are both forms of calamity or tests from Allah SWT.⁵

He added that the correct attitude towards these two conditions is gratitude when receiving blessings and patience when facing hardships, as the values upheld in Javanese society emphasize acceptance and patience. This interpretation also shows that calamity

⁴Lajnah Pentashihhan Mushaf Al-Qur'an (LPMQ), *Qur'an Kemenag*, LPMQ, 2022, <https://quran.kemenag.go.id>.

⁵Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān Fii Ma'rifati Ma'ani Al-Qur'an*, cet.1, juz 30 (Semarang: Asnalitera, 2020), p.145-147

does not only manifest in the form of disasters or physical suffering, but also in the form of blessings that often test the heart and spiritual awareness of humans. Therefore, KH. Shodiq Hamzah's interpretation not only translates literally but also enriches the meaning of the verse with local nuances, to cultivate a wise inner attitude and awareness of the divine wisdom behind all events.

This is clearly illustrated, that when humans are tested with honor and abundance, they think their Lord is honoring them, but when tested with scarcity, they think their Lord is humiliating them. However, both of these situations are tests that must be faced with the right attitude: gratitude when receiving blessings and patience when facing difficulties.

Such phenomena indicate that the public's understanding of *balā'* is still not comprehensive, as it emphasizes its negative aspects. Therefore, it is important to re-examine the meaning of *balā'* as understood in the Qur'an so that society can approach it in a more proportional and spiritual manner, both in sorrow and in pleasure. To bridge that understanding, this research uses Tafsir Al-Bayān fī Ma'rifat Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān by KH. Shodiq Hamzah as the main source. Tafsir Al-Bayān was chosen in this study because it has a linguistic and cultural approach that is very relevant, especially to the Javanese community. The focus on the Javanese community is not without reason. Java is a region with the largest Muslim population in Indonesia and possesses a wealth of traditions and a strong religious culture. The religious understanding of the Javanese people is greatly influenced by a Sufi approach, symbolism, and the transmission of Islamic values, which are often conveyed through the local language.⁶

⁶Mohamad Abdun Nasir, "Revisiting the Javanese Muslim Slametan: Islam, Local Tradition, Honor and Symbolic Communication," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, no. 2 (December 2019): p.329–58. Doi: <https://aljamiah.or.id/ajis/article/view/57203>

In this context, the use of Javanese-language exegesis such as Al-Bayān becomes important, as it can bridge the understanding of sacred texts with the language and thought processes of the local community.

Additionally, in Javanese society traditions, there are still many religious practices related to the concept of *balā'*, such as the *tolak bala ritual*, *slametan*, or forms of practices aimed at avoiding disasters.⁷ These practices are often carried out without a complete understanding of the meaning of *balā'* as explained in the Qur'an.

Besides, in the form of religious traditions, the interpretation of *balā'* by the Javanese community today is also evident in the way they face various life challenges amidst technological advancement and modernization. For example, among the Javanese rural and urban communities, many still interpret business failures, illnesses, or disasters as forms of "bad luck" or "*karma*," without understanding that these are forms of *balā'* or tests from Allah that contain wisdom. On the other hand, people who achieve ease, such as getting promoted due to connections, receiving instant wealth from digital marketing, or becoming local celebrities through social media content, often do not realize that all of this is also a test in the form of blessings.

This tendency is exacerbated by the culture of "*nrimo*" (surrender), which, if not accompanied by a deep religious understanding, can lead someone to accept their circumstances in a fatalistic manner, without any effort for introspection or spiritual improvement. However, in the Qur'an, trials, whether in the form of hardship or pleasure, are a means of divine education (*tarbiyah ilāhiyyah*) to measure the extent to which humans are grateful, patient, and remain steadfast.

⁷Muhammad Sayful. "Eksistensi Ritual Tolak Balā' Pada Masyarakat Nelayan Kodingareng." *Jurnal Interdisiplin Sosiologi Agama (JINSA)* 3, no. 1 (Januari–Juni 2022): p.35–38. Doi: <https://ejournal.iain-manado.ac.id/index.php/jinnsa/article/view/637>

Therefore, studying the concept of *balā'* through *Tafsir Al-Bayān* becomes very relevant because this interpretation not only uses the local language but also contains contextual and educational explanations that can touch the social realities of the Javanese community.⁸ Through this approach, it is hoped that the public's understanding of the concept of trials in Islam will become more comprehensive, not only interpreted as calamities but also as a process of divine education in both forms of hardship and pleasure.

This study aims to examine how *Tafsir Al-Bayān* interprets the concept of *balā'* as a test, and how the methodological and linguistic uniqueness of the tafsir is able to bridge the gap between the Qur'anic message and people's understanding. By addressing this aspect, the study is expected to contribute to the enrichment of thematic tafsir literature, as well as to open a wider dialogue space between local tafsir traditions and the understanding needs of Muslims today.

B. Research Question

1. What's The Concept of *Balā'* according to KH Shodiq Hamzah in *Tafsir Al-Bayān*?
2. How is the concept of *Balā'* relevant in the context of contemporary life?

C. Research Objectives and Benefits

1. Research Objective
 - To find out how the concept of *balā'* is interpreted by KH Shodiq Hamzah in *Tafsir Al-Bayān*.
 - To examine and describe the relevance of the concept of *balā'* in the context of contemporary life

⁸Zulaikhah Fitri Nur Ngauisah. "Karakteristik Tafsir Pesantren: Studi Tafsir *Al-Bayān fī Ma'rifati Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān* Karya KH. Shodiq Hamzah." *Mozaic: Islam Nusantara* 9, no. 1 (April 2023), p.5. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.47776/mozaic.v9i1.646>

2. Research Benefits

a) Theoretical Benefits

The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of thematic interpretation studies, especially regarding the concept of *balā'* in the Qur'an, as well as adding to the scientific treasury of interpretation by introducing KH Shodiq Hamzah's interpretation in *Tafsir Al-Bayān* which is still rarely studied academically.

b) Practical Benefits

The results of this study are expected to provide additional references and insights for students, academics, and researchers in understanding the concept of *balā'* in the Qur'an through a thematic approach, as well as introducing KH. Shodiq Hamzah's interpretive approach in *Tafsir Al-Bayān* which is contextual and down-to-earth. This research is also expected to be a bridge between the Qur'anic text and the reality of society through a simple and down-to-earth interpretive approach as in *Tafsir al-Bayān*.

D. Literature Review

Literature review is one of the important parts of a research. The reason is that this literature review makes the research clearer and more focused on the research horizon. In addition, it is also to find and provide new perspectives and authenticity from previous research results. The literature review in this study are:

First, the book "*Melestarikan Tradisi, Membumikan Kalam Ilahi*" (2022) is a collaborative work that deeply discusses "*Tafsir Al-Bayān fī Ma'rifati Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*" by KH. Shodiq Hamzah Usman. This book emphasizes KH. Shodiq Hamzah's distinctive approach, which integrates historical, linguistic, and social aspects in the interpretation of the Qur'an. The use of the Javanese language and Latin script becomes a prominent characteristic, making this interpretation an

effort to convey the messages of the Qur'an easily and contextually to the community, especially the younger generation. This book also explains how KH. Shodiq Hamzah composes the interpretation thematically and concisely, enriching the readers' understanding by presenting historical backgrounds, contextual stories, and relevant social dynamics. Through this work, the authors are committed to preserving the heritage of pesantren tafsir traditions while also demonstrating that local interpretations remain relevant in addressing the changes of the times.⁹

Second, the research conducted by Zulaikhah Fitri Nur Ngaisah, a student at UIN KH. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan, in her article published in the *Jurnal Mozaic Islam Nusantara* (2023) titled “Karakteristik Tafsir Pesantren: Studi *Tafsir Al-Bayān fī Ma‘rifati Ma‘ānī al-Qur’ān* Karya K.H. Shodiq Hamzah,” shows that the systematics of *Tafsir Al-Bayān* bear similarities to previous pesantren tafsir works, but there are differences in the aspect of verse interpretation. K.H. Shodiq Hamzah elaborates on the understanding of verses by compiling two or more verse texts related to a specific theme concerning the interpreted verse. This method makes it easier for readers, both from the ranks of pesantren students and the general public, to understand the content of the tafsir. Meanwhile, this research will specifically focus on the study of the concept of *balā’* in *Tafsir Al-Bayān* as the main theme of discussion.¹⁰

Third, the thesis titled “Makna *Balā’* dalam Al-Qur’an” by Muhammad Munawir, a student of the Department of Qur'anic Sciences and Tafsir at the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Philosophy, Ar-Raniry State Islamic University Banda Aceh (2021), presents research

⁹Islah Gusmian et al., *Melestarikan Tradisi, Membumikan Kalam Ilahi*, cet. 1 (Yogyakarta: RaSAIL Media Group, 2022), p.23

¹⁰Ngaisah, “Karakteristik Tafsir Pesantren,” p.1-14.

findings related to the concept of *balā'* from the perspective of Qur'anic verses, various terms associated with *balā'*, categorization of types of *balā'*, as well as the wisdom and ways to respond to *balā'* itself. Meanwhile, this research will focus on the discussion of the concept of *balā'* as specifically explained in *Tafsir Al-Bayān* by KH. Shodiq Hamzah as the main theme under study.¹¹

Fourth, the research conducted by Muhammad Amrullah and Sucila Ningsih, students of the Qur'anic Studies and Tafsir Program at the School of Qur'anic Sciences (STIQ), was published in the STIQ ISY Karima journal (2022) under the title "*Makna Lafazh Al-Balā' Dalam Al-Qur'an (Telaah Kitab Tafsir Al-Misbah)*." The results of this research indicate that the word *al-balā'* in the Qur'an means a test that encompasses both good and bad. The research examines the term *al-balā'* by focusing on its forms, namely the trials of goodness and the trials of evil. Meanwhile, this research focuses on the study of the concept of *balā'* as explained in *Tafsir Al-Bayān* by KH. Shodiq Hamzah as the main theme raised and different in the selection of its tafsir book.¹²

Fifth, the thesis titled "*Balā' Dalam Al-Qur'an Menurut Tafsir Al-Azhar Karya Buya Hamka*" by Muhammad Nurhandi Prasetva, a student of the Qur'anic Studies and Interpretation Program at the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Studies at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (2018), shows that *al-balā'* means a test that can be in the form of both goodness and evil. Tests in the form of goodness are called *ibla'*, while tests in the form of evil are called *balā'*. In this thesis, verses about *balā'* are classified into three parts:

¹¹Muhammad Munawir, *Makna Balā' dalam Al-Qur'an* (Skripsi, Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, 2021), p.10–11.

¹²Muhammad Amrullah dan Sucila Ningsih, "*Makna Lafazh Al-Balā' dalam Al-Qur'an (Telaah Kitab Tafsir Al-Misbah)*," *Jurnal STIQ ISY Karima* 3, no. 1 (2022): p.35-53, Doi: <https://ejurnal.stiqisykarima.ac.id/index.php/AlKarima/article/view/116/85>

balā' as sunnatullah, balā' in the form of goodness and evil, and balā' in the form of wealth and soul. Meanwhile, this research specifically focuses on the study of the concept of balā' in the Tafsir Al-Bayān by KH. Shodiq Hamzah as the main theme under examination, thus differing in the selection of its interpretation.¹³

Sixth, the thesis titled "Makna Balā' Menurut Penafsiran Ibnu Katsir dan Relevansinya Dengan Pandemi Covid-19" by Evi Listiawati, a student of the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Humanities at Walisongo State Islamic University (2022), shows that the meaning of balā' according to Ibn Kathir is a form of test from Allah SWT, both in the form of hardship and pleasure, which is then linked to the phenomenon of the coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak. This research concludes that, according to several Muslim figures, the Covid-19 outbreak is a test from Allah SWT aimed at measuring the level of a person's faith. Meanwhile, this research focuses on the study of the concept of balā' as explained in Tafsir Al-Bayān by KH. Shodiq Hamzah as the main theme presented and the selection of a different tafsir book along with its relevance.¹⁴

Seventh, the thesis titled "Balā' Menurut Kajian Tafsir Al-Misbah Karya M. Quraish Shihab" by Irma Sari, a student of the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Philosophy at Ar-Raniry State Islamic University Darussalam Banda Aceh (2018), shows that the balā' given by Allah can be either positive or negative. This research states that balā' can take the form of tests and calamities that come solely from Allah, balā' that also includes assistance as a form of test from Allah, and balā' caused by human sins as a form of warning for humans to return to the path that pleases Him. Meanwhile, this research focuses on the

¹³Muhammad Nurhandi Prasetva, *Balā' dalam Al-Qur'an Menurut Tafsir Al-Azhar Karya Buya Hamka* (Skripsi, Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara, 2018), p.17-86

¹⁴Evi Listiawati, *Makna Balā' Menurut Penafsiran Ibnu Katsir dan Relevansinya dengan Pandemi Covid-19* (Skripsi, Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo, 2022), p.40-68

discussion of the concept of *balā'* as explained in *Tafsir Al-Bayān* by KH. Shodiq Hamzah as the main theme of the study, with the distinguishing factor being the choice of the tafsir book.¹⁵

The above studies differ from the research that the author will conduct. Here, the author focuses the research on how the concept of *balā'* is explained in the book *Tafsir Al-Bayān fī Ma'rifati Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, a contemporary Nusantara tafsir work that is still relatively new in the realm of tafsir scholarship. The uniqueness of this tafsir lies in its approach, which is not only textual but also involves elements of linguistics, spirituality, and morality, making the interpretation of the concept of *balā'* more comprehensive and contextual.

The relevance of this research to the contemporary context is evident in how *Tafsir Al-Bayān* is able to provide practical explanations regarding *balā'* amidst technological advancements and globalization that bring new challenges for Muslims, such as conveniences that have the potential to cause negligence and tests of patience in facing rapid social changes. Unlike classical interpretations such as *Tafsir al-Tabari*, *al-Qurtubi*, or *Ibn Kathir*, which tend to emphasize only the aspects of narration and linguistics, *Tafsir Al-Bayān* employs a more applicative approach to social life while also highlighting the local Islamic values characteristic of *pesantren* in Indonesia.

E. Research Method

Research methods are a scientific approach used to obtain data in order to achieve specific goals and benefits. This scientific approach refers to rational scientific principles based on real (empirical) experiences and systematically organized.¹⁶ This research aims to

¹⁵Irma Sari, *Balā' Menurut Kajian Tafsir Al-Misbah Karya M. Quraish Shihab* (Skripsi, Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, 2018), p.41-64

¹⁶Abdul Fattah Nasution, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif*, cet. 1 (Medan: Harva

deeply examine the concept of *balā'* in the Qur'an as interpreted by KH. Shodiq Hamzah in *Tafsir Al-Bayān fī Ma'rifati Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, taking into account the linguistic, contextual, and socio-religious dimensions in his interpretation.

1. Type and Approaches to Research

This research is qualitative in nature with a library research type, as all the analyzed data comes from written sources, particularly the Qur'an and tafsir books. The approach used is a thematic approach (*maudhu'i*), which involves collecting verses from the Qur'an that contain the word or concept of *balā'*, and then analyzing them in depth based on the theme of trials (*balā'*) in human life.¹⁷

This research also employs a linguistic and contextual approach to understand the dynamics of language and the socio-religious context in *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, which is rich in local content, the distinctive language style of *pesantren*, and its closeness to the experiences of the Javanese community. Additionally, a theological approach is also used to understand how the meaning of *balā'* is explained within the framework of the relationship between humans and the divine will.

2. Data Sources (Primary and Secondary)

Primary data in this study were obtained from the Qur'an and the book *Tafsir Al-Bayān fī Ma'rifati Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān* by KH. Shodi Hamzah, the first printing of the Asnalitera publisher, which became the main object in analyzing the concept of *balā'*. The secondary data includes supporting literature such as books,

Creativ, 2023), p.1

¹⁷Dinni Nazhifah and Fatimah Isyti Karimah, "Hakikat Tafsir Maudhu'ī dalam al-Qur'an," *Jurnal Iman dan Spiritualitas* 1, no.3 (2021): p.368–376. Doi: <https://journal.uinsgd.ac.id/index.php/jis/article/view/13033/pdf>

scientific journals, articles, papers and relevant online sources that discuss the concept of *balā'* in the Qur'an, tafsir theory, and thematic studies of the Qur'an.

By combining these primary and secondary data sources, this research is expected to produce a comprehensive, contextual, and in-depth analysis when understanding the interpretation of the concept of *balā'* according to KH. Shodiq Hamzah.

3. Data Collection Technique

Data collection techniques are systematic procedures used to obtain the information, facts, or data needed in the implementation of research or a scientific study. In this research, the data collection technique used is document study, which involves tracing, reading, and analyzing written sources relevant to the research focus.¹⁸ The primary data is obtained from verses of the Qur'an related to the theme of *balā'* and their interpretation in Tafsir Al-Bayān.

The investigation is conducted systematically by following the discussion flow of the theme of *balā'* as explained in the primary source and supported by other relevant references. This research specifically examines the verses of the Qur'an that contain the word or concept of *balā'*, both in the context of tests that are positive (good) and negative (bad). In addition, data were also collected through the analysis of other supporting literature such as books, journals, scientific articles, and relevant online sources to strengthen the understanding of the concept of *balā'*. This technique is carried out in-depth and systematically to produce a comprehensive interpretation of the subject of study.

4. Data Analysis Technique

¹⁸Milya Sari dan Asmendri, "Penelitian Kepustakaan (Library Research) dalam Penelitian Pendidikan IPA," *Natural Science: Jurnal Penelitian Bidang IPA dan Pendidikan IPA* 6, no. 1 (2020): p.41–53. Doi: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/335289208.pdf>

In this study, data analysis techniques were carried out using content analysis and discourse analysis. Content analysis is used to identify, categorize and examine Qur'anic verses that contain the concept of *balā'* as interpreted in *Tafsir Al-Bayān fī Ma'rifati Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*. Through this technique, the researcher evaluates the content of the tafsir systematically to capture the meaning, theme and tendency of the interpretation of the concept of *balā'* both in the form of good and bad tests.¹⁹

Meanwhile, discourse analysis is applied to understand the use of language in the social and cultural context of religion, especially in tracing how the meaning of the verses is formed, interpreted, and articulated by the interpreter. This approach allows researchers to explore the cultural, spiritual and moral values contained in the interpretation, as well as see how these values are presented as part of the meaning of the concept of people's lives.

The combination of these two techniques allows for a comprehensive understanding, both of the content of the interpretation text and of the moral and cultural messages that are conveyed through the interpretation.

F. Outline Thesis

Chapter one, this chapter consists of several sub-chapters. That is the background in which it explains about the things behind this research, the reasons for the need to conduct this research, and the latest findings of the author that distinguish it from previous research. The next sub chapter is the formulation of the problem, containing the things that will be discussed by the author. Next is the purpose and benefits of research which contains the objectives and benefits that will

¹⁹Ulya, Dr. *Berbagai Pendekatan dalam Studi Al-Qur'an: Penggunaan Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial, Humaniora, dan Kebahasaan dalam Penafsiran al-Qur'an*. Yogyakarta: Idea Press, 2017, p.13-15

be achieved from this research, then a literature review which contains the differences between this research and previous research. Then, the research method which contains the methods that will be used by the author. As well as a writing systematic that describes an overview of this research.

Chapter two, this chapter consists of three subsections: Definition of *Balā'*, *Balā'* in Theological Context, and Synonyms of *Balā'* in Islam.

Chapter three, this chapter contains four sub-chapters namely Biography of KH Shodiq Hamzah, Profile and History of *Tafsir Al-Bayān fī Ma'rifati Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, Systematics and Characteristics of *Tafsir al-Bayān*, and The Verses of *Balā'* in the Qur'an and Their Interpretation in Tafsir Al-Bayan

Chapter four, this chapter contains two subsections, namely the Analysis of the Concept of *Balā'* in Tafsir Al-Bayān and the Relevance of the Concept of *Balā'* in the Context of Contemporary Life.

Chapter Five, This chapter explains the conclusions of the material description that the author has described and provides detailed answers to the formulation of the problems that have been raised as well as suggestions related to this research.

CHAPTER II

THE CONCEPT OF *BALĀ'* IN TERMINOLOGICAL STUDIES

A. Definition of *Balā'*

Balā' is a word that comes from Arabic, the origin of the word is *balā* (بلا) or *baliya* (بلى) which means *jaraba* (جرب), *imtahana* (امتحان), *ikhtabara* (اختبر)) so that *balā'* means *al-ikhtibāru wa al-imtahānu wa aṭṭakhrību* which means test, trial and notification.¹ Meanwhile, *balā'* in the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) means disaster, misfortune, or trial.²

The use of the word "*balā'*" during the time of the Prophet Muhammad in Arabia had deep roots and various meanings. Etymologically, the word comes from the Arabic "*baliya*," which was originally used to describe the condition of clothes that were weathered due to long wear.³ From here, the term *balā'* developed into a term that refers to the tests or trials that a person experiences, whether in the form of hardships or pleasures.

The word *balā'* which means test is composed of four letters, namely: *ba'*, *lam*, *ya'*, and *wau*. Morphologically, the term comes from the root *balā'-yablu-balwan* or *balā'an* which means: to show something clearly, to damage, to test, and to cause grief.⁴ According to scholars of Qur'anic Studies, *khitab bil fi'il yadullu 'ala al-tajaddud*

¹Abi Fadl Jamāl al-Dīn Muhammad bin Makrim Ibn Manẓūr al-Miṣrī, *Lisān al-ʿArab* (Lebanon: Dār Ṣādir, 1414 H), p.83–84.

²Tim Penyusun Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*, Cet. 2 (Jakarta: Pusat Bahasa, 2008), p.126.

³Muhammad Shodiq, Chicha Putro Rahman, dan Mauidlotun Nisa, "Moderasi Teologi Balā' dalam Tafsir *Al-Amtsal* Nashir Makarim Shiraz: Respon Atas Fatalisme dan Eskapisme," *An-Nawa: Jurnal Studi Islam* 5, no. 2 (2023): p.154. Doi: <https://scispace.com/pdf/moderasi-teologi-bala-dalam-tafsir-al-amtsal-nashir-makarim-oarmayl5pt.pdf>

⁴Nasywa Rahmatin Nabila, *Tipologi Bencana dalam Al-Qur'an (Telaah Ayat-ayat Bencana dengan Pendekatan Tafsir Maqāṣidī)* (Skripsi, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel, 2021), p.37.

wal huduts means that *khitab* with *fi'il mudhari'* indicates events that are always undergoing renewal.⁵ This implies that Allah SWT will provide *balā'* or tests in human life and this will continue until the end of his life.

According to Ar-Ragib al-Asfahani, *balā'* is a gift from Allah SWT to His servants in the form of a test. This gift sometimes needs to be appreciated or endured with patience, because Allah SWT gives *balā'* sometimes in the form of blessings or calamities. Therefore, if one receives a blessing, it should be appreciated, and if one faces a calamity, it should be endured with patience. Therefore, if you get a favor you need to be grateful and if you get a disaster you need to be patient.⁶ In the words of Allah SWT in QS. Al-Anbiya':35

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ وَنَبْلُوكُم بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً وَإِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ

Meaning: Every living being will experience death. We test you with both evil and good as a trial. To Us you will be returned.

Imam ar-Razi argues not much different from ar-Ragib, in the book *Mukhtar al-Sihah* explains that the word *balā'* is used to describe a test that is good or bad it is absolutely from Allah SWT.⁷ Therefore, Allah SWT says in Surah Al-Mulk/67:2

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ
الْعَفُورُ

Meaning: He created death and life to test you, which of you is better in deeds. He is the Mighty, the Forgiving.⁸

⁵Muhammad Munawir, *Makna Bala dalam Al-Qur'an* (Skripsi, Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, 2021), p.10–11. Doi: https://repository.ar-raniry.ac.id/32555/1/Muhammad%20Munawir_IAT_Revisi%201.pdf

⁶Muhammad Iqbal, *Konsep Bala Perspektif Al-Qur'an (Kajian Tematik dengan Pendekatan Semiotik Charles Sanders Peirce)* (Skripsi, Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, 2018), p.35.

⁷Muhammad Abi Bakr ar-Rāzī, *Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifah, 2005), p.429.

⁸Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an (LPMQ), *Qur'an Kemenag*, LPMQ, 2022, <https://quran.kemenag.go.id>.

Abu Hilal ak-Askary argues differently from the views of previous scholars, namely the word *balā'* or *al-Ibtala* is addressed to *mubtala* (the person being tested) in terms of obedience and disobedience, in a way that Allah SWT will provide a difficult test and dislike it.⁹

From the various opinions of scholars regarding the meaning of *al-balā'*, it can be concluded that the words *al-balā'* and *al-Ibtalā* have similar meanings, namely tests and trials from Allah in the form of good or bad. These tests are given to all humans to measure the quality of their faith, piety, love and obedience to Allah.

Allah has absolute power over human life. Everything that happens on this earth, including the calamities that befall individuals wherever they are, is in accordance with His will and decree. As the creator of mankind, Allah SWT knows what is best for His servants. His mercy and compassion are far greater than the test given. Every event that occurs is by the will of Allah SWT and has been recorded in al-Lauh al-Mahfuz.

Life in this world is always accompanied by various tests and trials, which are not always in the form of things that are disliked, but can also be pleasant things. Therefore, Allah SWT forbids His servants to feel that they are hated when they experience something they do not want, and to feel loved when they are given wealth, pleasure, or happiness.

In the view of the common people, the word *balā'* is often associated with Allah's wrath towards His servants. They believe that *balā'* arises when a person or group of people commits an offense or violates the commandments of Allah SWT. This understanding has become a common term among Muslims, especially in Indonesia.

⁹Abū Hilāl al-‘Askarī, *al-Furūq al-Lughawiyyah*, 3rd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīdah, 1997), p.210.

B. *Balā* in Theological Context

Basically, within the framework of Islamic theology "*sunnatullah*," *balā'* is understood as a means of trial set by Allah in human life. This view emphasizes that every event, whether it be hardship or pleasure, serves as a means to test faith, shape character, and educate humans to become wiser and more responsible. This emphasizes that humans possess reason and effort, yet remain within the framework of divine causality rather than being subject to an absolute fate without reason.¹⁰

From a Sunni perspective, classical exegetes like Quraish Shihab and Sayyid Qutb emphasize that *balā'* is an inevitable part of Allah's decree. In this framework, the emergence of both pleasure and hardship is part of the divine *sunnah* mentioned in the hadith "*khoirihi wa syarrihi minallāh*", which means that everything good and bad comes from Allah. This trial is not merely an event but a means to cultivate patience, gratitude, and an evaluation of faith in every tested soul.

Meanwhile, the Mu'tazilah perspective highlights the aspect of God's justice and the role of humans rationally. They emphasize the principle of *al-adl* (Divine Justice) and that humans hold moral control over their actions. Therefore, the Mu'tazilah believe that calamities in the form of evil (*syarr*) do not entirely originate from Allah but rather are caused by human actions (*syarrihi minannās*), while goodness (*khair*) still originates from Allah. This is based on the belief that Allah would not act unjustly by creating evil without reason.¹¹

¹⁰Annisa Rahmalia et al., "Studi Kasus Mengenai Keseimbangan antara Akal dan Kehendak Bebas dalam Hakikat Manusia Menurut Islam," *Tashdiq: Jurnal Kajian Agama dan Dakwah* 8, no. 3 (2024), p.13-16. Doi: <https://ejournal.warunayama.org/index.php/tashdiq/article/view/8699/7720>

¹¹Muhammad Shodiq, Chicha Putro Rahman, dan Mauidlotun Nisa, "Moderasi Teologi *Balā'* dalam Tafsir Al-Amtsal Nashir Makarim Shiraz: Respon Atas Fatalisme dan Eskapisme," *An-Nawa: Jurnal Studi Islam* 5, no. 2 (2023): p.154, doi: <https://scispace.com/pdf/moderasi-teologi-bala-dalam-tafsir-al-amtsal-nashir-makarim-oarmayl5pt.pdf>

This comparison then gives rise to two contradictory theological understandings: Sunnis attribute both good (khair) and evil (syarr) to the will of Allah (khoirihi wa syarrihi minallāh), while the Mu'tazilah distinguish that evil is a result of human actions (syarrihi minannās), not directly from Allah. Both views are articulated in theological texts and explained in their respective books. Sunni theology upholds the principle of absolute divinity, whereas the Mu'tazilah emphasizes moral justice, leading to a division of responsibility between God and humans.¹²

To clarify this meaning, we can look at concrete examples where natural disasters or social crises are often considered as balā'. From the Sunni perspective, this is a manifestation of God's will. On the other hand, from the Mu'tazilah perspective, most of these disasters are seen as the result of human actions, such as environmental destruction or injustice. Therefore, the faithful are responsible for changing the situation through reason and concrete actions. This understanding opens the space for a moderate synthesis that sees balā' as a mixture of divine will and human effort, not just a unilateral decision by God or semi-absolute human freedom.

C. Synonyms of Balā' in Islam

In Islamic teachings, every event, whether good or bad, that befalls humans is not viewed as an isolated incident, but rather as part of the divine decree system aimed at testing the quality of human faith, patience, and sincerity. The Qur'an views every form of event experienced by humans as a means of divine education (spiritual education), not merely fate without meaning. Theologically, Sunni groups, particularly the Ash'ari school, believe that all forms of events

¹²Muhyidin dan Nasihin, "Rasionalitas Teologi Mu'tazilah," *Ummul Qura: Jurnal Institut Pesantren Sunan Drajat (INSUD) Lamongan* 15, no. 2 (Oktober 2020): p.77–85, doi: <https://ejournal.unsuda.ac.id/index.php/UQ/article/view/382/364>

in the world both pleasant and painful are part of Allah's will (*irādah*) and created by Him (*khalq*), including calamities. According to them, disasters or trials are not a sign of Allah's hatred, but rather part of His wisdom in governing the universe and educating His servants. This view aligns with the opinions of figures such as Ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyah, who stated that calamities are a form of Allah's mercy aimed at purifying the heart and elevating the spiritual rank of humans, and al-Ghazālī, who asserted that suffering is not the end of everything, but rather a process towards moral perfection and closeness to God.¹³

In this context, the term *balā'* (البلاء) occupies an important position as one of the main terms in the Qur'an that refers to the concept of trial. However, *balā'* is not the only term used in the Qur'an to describe the meaning of testing. There are several other terms that semantically overlap, such as *fitnah* (فتنة), *musibah* (مصيبة), *ikhtibār* (اختبار), and *tamhīṣ* (تمحيص). These four terms have different root words and nuances of meaning, but they all refer to a form of test or trial aimed at measuring the quality of human response to God's will. For example, *fitnah* often refers to a test in the form of temptation, social pressure, or power slander. Disaster refers to a painful event or catastrophe that comes suddenly. *Ikhtibār* more indicates a testing process to recognize quality. Whereas *tamhīṣ* is related to purification, which is a test that functions to filter and cleanse humans from moral evils.¹⁴

One of the terms closely associated with *balā'* is *fitnah* (فتنة). Etymologically, according to Ibn Faris, the root word *fa-ta-nun* (ف-ت-ن) contains the basic meaning of test and trial.¹⁵ He explains that the basic form of this word is "*fatantu al-dhahaba idzā imtaḥantuhu*,"

¹³Halim Purnomo, *Spiritualitas dan Perilaku Pengemis di Kota Cirebon* (Yogyakarta: Cakrawala Budaya, 2017), p.125-150.

¹⁴Muhammad Munawir. *Makna Balā' dalam Al-Qur'an*, (Skripsi, Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry, 2021), p.12

¹⁵Ibn Fāris, *Maqāyīs al-Lughah*, jilid 4 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr), p.472.

meaning: "I test gold with fire if I want to test it." This shows that fitnah, in terms of language, is related to the testing of the quality and authenticity of something, just as gold is tested through the process of burning to separate it from mixed elements. Meanwhile, in the context of Sharia terminology, fitnah still means trial and test, but it is more often used in the context of severe trials, related to unpleasant matters, and containing the potential to shake a person's patience and steadfastness of faith when facing temptation, conflict, or moral deviation.¹⁶

The relationship between fitnah and balā' lies in their shared root meaning, both referring to the concept of tests and trials. However, linguists differentiate between the two in terms of scope: balā' has a more general meaning, encompassing tests in the form of both good and bad, whereas fitnah is more often associated with severe tests that have the potential to mislead or lead to deviation. Therefore, although both have the meaning of a test, fitnah tends to emphasize aspects of temptation, chaos, and social-spiritual tension in the context of testing.

Another term that is also closely related is musibah (مصيبة). Linguistically, musibah means nawā'ib, anything that is disliked or painful.¹⁷ In *Lisān al-‘Arab*, Ibn Manzhūr explains that musibah is identical to the meaning of difficulty, disaster, or calamity that befalls humans.¹⁸ Terminologically, musibah is understood as any form of unpleasant event that directly impacts the physical, emotional, or social condition of humans. Thus, musibah can be positioned as a concrete form of balā', which is the realization of a test in the form of suffering, failure, or loss that Allah inflicts upon humans as a means of introspection and drawing closer to Him.

¹⁶Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath al-Bārī*, jilid 11 (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifah), p.176.

¹⁷Al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī, *Al-Mufradāt fī Ghārīb al-Qur‘ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifah), p.377

¹⁸Ibn Manzhūr, *Lisān al-‘Arab*, jilid 1 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir), p.534

Similarly, the word *ikhtibār* (اختبار), which in meaning is very close to *balā'*. In *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, *al-Jauharī* mentions that "*khābartuhu idzā balatuhu wa ikhtābartuhu*," which means "I have known something when I have tested it."¹⁹ From this definition, it is clear that *ikhtibār* means testing to determine the degree, quality, or content of something in depth. In *Tāj al-‘Arūs*, it is also mentioned that a test (*ikhtibār*) means an effort to ascertain something with certainty, or to uncover the truth of unverified matters. Thus, in the context of the Qur'an, *ikhtibār* is used to indicate God's evaluative process towards humans in order to reveal the quality of their faith and deeds. Its relationship with *balā'* lies in its function: *ikhtibār* is one form of the implementation of the concept of testing itself, both in its outward and inward aspects.

Furthermore, the term *at-tamḥiṣ* (التمحيص) cannot be overlooked. Etymologically, its root (م-ح-ص) indicates the meaning of *takhliṣ wa tanqiyah*,²⁰ which is to purify and cleanse something from dirt or impurities. In a spiritual context, Allah purifies His servants from sins through a certain process of trials. As it is said in classical Arabic, "I purify gold with fire" means I cleanse it from other impure elements. *Mujahid*, one of the tafsir scholars of the Tabi'in generation, stated that the meaning of *tamḥiṣ* is a test aimed at purifying oneself from sins and deviations. Therefore, *tamḥiṣ* carries the meaning of a test that not only measures but also purifies. In other words, this process culminates in a positive outcome, namely spiritual enhancement and the purification of the soul from moral blemishes. As for the relationship between tests and filtering (*tamḥiṣ*), it lies in the orientation of the results. If a test can lead to two possibilities good or bad results, then *tamḥiṣ* places more emphasis on the positive final outcome, which is purification and sanctification. Thus, a test can be a form of

¹⁹*Al-Jauharī, Al-Ṣiḥāḥ fī al-Lughah*, jilid 2 (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm li al-Malāyīn), p.642.

²⁰*Ibn Fāris, Mīzān al-Lughah*, jilid 5 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr), p.300.

measurement, while *tamhīṣ* is an advanced stage of that process aimed at purifying and improving a person's spiritual quality. This clarifies that within the framework of the Qur'an, trials (*balā'*) and the terms related to them do not only serve as a form of divine evaluation but also as a medium for the purification of the soul and the maturation of human faith.

If understood from the overall previous explanation, the position of *balā'* in relation to other terms such as *fiṭnah*, *musibah*, *ikhtibār*, and *tamhīṣ* can be conceptually described as a large circle or main umbrella that encompasses various forms of tests and trials in human life. *Balā'* functions as a master term that encompasses the entire spectrum of divine tests, whether pleasant or painful, external or internal, measuring or purifying. Within this broad circle of meaning, "*fiṭnah*" occupies a space that emphasizes the aspect of trials that shake and tempt; "*musibah*" represents the side of trials that manifest in the form of concrete suffering; "*ikhtibār*" leads to an evaluative process that reveals a person's true qualities; while "*tamhīṣ*" marks the stage of spiritual purification as a result of the trials endured. Thus, *balā'* is not a standalone term, but rather a broad framework that encompasses all forms of divine intervention aimed at educating, testing, and perfecting humans through their life experiences.

CHAPTER III

KH. SHODIQ HAMZAH AND THE INTERPRETATION OF BALĀ' IN TAFSIR AL-BAYĀN

A. Biography of KH Shodiq Hamzah

KH Shodiq Hamzah, whose full name is Shodiq bin Hamzah bin Uthman, was born in Demak on January 1, 1954. He is a native of Tambak Roto village, Sayung, Demak, Central Java. KH Shodiq Hamzah is the second son of seven children who are descendants of the couple KH Hamzah Uthman and Nyai Hj. Rohanah. His father was a religious figure who was active in the local community, and this role was then continued by his children, including KH. Shodiq Hamzah.

Shodiq Hamzah's early education was provided by his father, which included learning about the Qur'an and the nahwu book *al-Jurumiyyah*. Meanwhile, the formal education he received was in elementary school. Furthermore, KH Shodiq Hamzah continued his education at the Futuhiyyah Islamic Boarding School located in Suburan, Mranggen, Demak, the caretaker of the boarding school at that time was KH Muslih Abdurrahman al-Maraqi, a Mursyid Tariqah Qadiriyyah wa Naqsabandiyah.

At the Tsanawiyah level, Shodiq Hamzah completed his mastery of nahwu in *Alfiah Ibn Malik*, before graduating in 1972. He also studied at the Madrasah Aliyah in the same boarding school, and at the same time, he had been given the mandate by Kiai Muslih to teach the book of *'Uqud al-Jumman* and *Alfiah Ibn Malik* at the Diniyah Futuhiyyah Madrasah, until he graduated in 1976. From Kiai Muslih, Kiai Shodiq inherited the tradition of writing, as he was listed as one of the katibs (scribes) who were often assigned to record Kiai Muslih's works. Therefore, it is not surprising that Kiai Shodiq is now a prolific scholar in producing various scientific works. Evidence of his productivity can be seen since he was still at the Futuhiyyah Islamic

Boarding School, where he succeeded in producing a work in the field of sharaf science consisting of two volumes entitled *Mutammimah Sharfiyah*.¹

KH Shodiq Hamzah's enthusiasm in studying led him to receive a scholarship from the pesantren to continue his education to the college level at the Nahdlatul Ulama University in Surakarta, where he obtained a B.A. or Bachelor's degree in 1980. After completing his studies at UNU Surakarta, he decided to migrate to study in Makkah and Madinah between 1981 and 1983. While in Makkah, he served in the house of Shaykh Damanhuri al-Makki. In addition to his service, he also studied with several Shaykhs, including Shaykh Damanhuri al-Makki (*Tafsir Jalalain dan Ilmu Hikmah*), Shaykh Daud al-Makki (*'Ulum al-Qur'an*), Shaykh Ibrahim al-Mujallad al-Makki (*'Ulum al-Qur'an*), Shaykh Yasin al-Fadani (*Ilmu Sanad*), and Sayyid Muhammad 'Alwi al-Maliki al-Hasani al-Makki (*Fath al-Wahab*), as well as Shaykh Muhammad al-Saffar al-Saqafi.²

A year after that, KH Shodiq Hamzah moved to Medina to study from Shaykh Muhammad Mahmud al-Hajar al-Madani (*Tariqah*), Shaykh Ridwan al-Madani (*Tariqah*), Shaykh Abdul Mu'in al-Madani (*Tariqah*), Dr. Sayyid al-Kaf al-Madani (*Tariqah*), and Dr. Abdul Mu'in al-Madani (*Tariqah*). Sayyid al-Kaf al-Madani (*Fathul 'Alam*), Shaykh Abdul Halif al-Madani (*Hadith*), Shaykh Basir Ahmad al-Madani (*'Ulum al-Qur'an*), and Shaykh Yusuf al-Qardawi al-Madani (*'Ulum al-Qur'an*).

In 1983, precisely after KH Shodiq Hamzah completed his studies in Makkah Madinah, he returned to his homeland and decided to marry

¹Islah Gusmian et al., *Tafsir Al-Bayan: Melestarikan Tradisi, Membumikan Kalam Ilahi*, Cet. 1 (Semarang: RaSAIL Media Group, 2022), p.52.

²Zulaikhah Fitri Nur Ngaisah, "Karakteristik Tafsir Pesantren: Studi *Tafsir Al-Bayan fi Ma'rifati Ma'anī al-Qur'ān* Karya KH. Shodiq Hamzah," *Mozaic: Islam Nusantara*, vol.9, no.1, (April 2023): p.5. Doi: <https://journal.unusia.ac.id/index.php/mozaic/article/view/646>

Mrs. Hj Masri'ah Ridwan from Semarang and was blessed with 5 children, namely: Dr. H. Mochammad Shidqon Prabowo, SH. MH, Rasyidah Shodiq (died as a child), Lailiyah Shodiq (died as a child), H. Mohammad Zamzami Urif, and Hayati Mardliyah.³

KH Shodiq Hamzah is actively involved in social community organizations in the midst of his busy schedule as the caretaker of As-Shodiqiyah Islamic Boarding School, including: Advisor of PLN Central Java, Advisor of MUI Central Java, Advisor of the Central Java Great Mosque, deputy chairman of al-Tarbiyat al-Islmiyah Central Java, former deputy secretary of Rabithah Ma'hid Islamiyah Central Java, member of the Shari'ah Council of the Central Hajj Guidance Group Forum, board member of *Jam'iyah Ahli al-Thoriqoh al-Mu'tabarah al-Nahdliyah Idharah Wustha*, Ra'is Syuriyah PCNU Semarang City, founder of the al-Fattah Sayung Demak education foundation, founder and supervisor of KBIH As-Shodiqiyyah Semarang, activist and one of the initiators of the establishment of Wahid Hasyim University Semarang, former Semarang National Awakening Party DPC Shuro Council.

KH Shodiq Hamzah's works consist of several fields of knowledge, namely: Tafsir Al-Qur'an (*Tafsir Al-Bayān fī Ma'rifati Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*), Al-Qur'an (*Zubdat al-Bayān fī Bayān Faḍā'il Suwar al-Qur'ān, Qalbu al-Qur'ān*), Nahwu Science (*Al-Qawaid as-Saniyah fī al-Masail an-Nahwiyah, Al-Qawa'id al-Mi'ah Li Barqi al-Talabah Fi Fahmi al-'Ulm al-Nahwiyah*), Tarjamah Yasin & Tahlil (*Zilāl al-Nahwiyyah*). Tahlil (*Zilāl al-Manāzil fī Tarjamah Yāsīn wa Tahlīl*), Sharaf Science (*Mutammimāt al-Ṣarfīyyah fī 'Ilm al-Ṣarf*), Dictionaries (*Kamus 'Amiyah, Kamus Haji*), Fiqh (*Khaṣā'is Syahr Ramaḍān fī Nail al-Ghufrān wa Qam' al-Ṭugyān, Terjemah Fiqh 4*

³Gusmian et al., *Tafsir Al-Bayan*, p.51.

Madzhab Jilid.1, Durar al-Qayyimah fi Manzūmat al-Safīnah, Adab Ziarah, Manasik Umrah; manasik haji; arafah dan persiapannya, Panduan Prakti Tentang Proses Ziarah dan Umrah, Nazm al-Safīnat al-Najah), Akhlak Tasawuf (al-Ijtihad wa al-Taqlid; Syi'ir pepiling Pati), Sufism (Munajat, Tarjamah Hizb Ghazali, Jam'ul Ahzab; Wirid al-Anjab li Madzifati al-Ahbab, Mudha'afatul Ujur fi Tsawab al-Amal al-Mabrur; Jam'wa Taqdim), Book of wirid (Tarjamat al-Hizb al-Nasr), Hadith (al-Awrad al-Ma'surah min al-Ahadis al-Mukhtarah), Fiqh of Worship (al-Awail wa al-Fadha'il), Practices and Prayers (Keutamaan dan Amalan di Bulan Qamariyyah), Collection of Prayers (Do'a penangkal & Obat Wabah Corona), Collection of Majlis Opening Recitations (at-Thariq al-Wadih bi Iqtida' as-Salaf as-Salih fi Tartib al-Fawatih), Book of Tariqah (Risalah Thoriqoh am-Naqsabandiyah), Dalil Istighasah (Dalil al-Istigasah wa al-Wasilah), History/Biography (Ulama Panutan Umat, Al-Nahr al-Jari Fi Tarjamat al-'Allamah KH. Muhammad Hasyim Asy'ari Wadi'u Labinati al-Istiqlali al-Indunisi), Shalawat (Sholawat Annahdliyah), Aqidah (al-Yawaqith as-Sunna li Ma'rifati Ma'ani wa Khawasi al-Asma' al-Husna, Al-Bid'ah wa Ahl al-Sunnah wa Ahl Jama'ah), Akhlak (Adab Safar, Mengingat Teman Seiman., Al-Taslim Wa al-Ta'zim fi Tarjamati Adab al-'Alim Wa Muta'allim Li Hadrati as-Syaikh Hasyim Asy'ari).⁴

B. Profile and History of *Tafsir Al-Bayān fī Ma'rifati Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*

Tafsir Al-Bayān fī Ma'rifati Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān is the work of KH Shodiq Hamzah Usman. This book is a tafsir of the Qur'an written in Javanese using Latin letters (*pegon millennial*). The language level used is Javanese kromo in the muqaddimah of the book (*tembung pembuko*), the selection of this language is related to the geosociocultural domicile or area where KH Shodiq Hamzah lives and the

⁴Gusmian et al., *Tafsir Al-Bayan*, p.54-58

conditions of the Naqsabandiyah Tariqah congregation, pilgrims who are members of the worship guidance by him and his students.

In the muqaddimah of Tafsir al-Bayān, KH Shodiq Hamzah said: *"Sayektosipun poro sesepuh masayayikh ulama' Profesor Doktor sampun kathah ingkang damel Tafsir Al-Qur'an semanten tiang awam taksih betahaken tafsir ingkang praktis ingkang saget kewahos milai saking tiang ingkang pendidikanipun SD/MI ngantos dumugi pendidikan S3, pramilo Alfaqir dipun dorong rencang-rencang ingkang babar pisan mboten mengenal madrasah soho mboten mengenal pondok pesantren supados Alfaqir damel tafsir ingkang saget kawahos masyarakat awam saget memahami kanthi perkalimah utawi perkata saestu pamundutipun poro konco-konco khususipun jam'ah haji ingkang tergabung wonten ing bimbingan asshodiqiyah Jl. Sawah Besar Timur No.99 Kaligawe – Semarang Alfaqir menyanggupi panyuwunan kasebat"*⁵

KH Shodiq's statement above shows that the book of Tafsir Al-Bayān was born as a response to the need to add insight into the Qur'an that is in line with the development and socio-cultural context of its readers. That way the reach of the Qur'an will expand, because the understanding is made easier so that people can directly capture the meaning of the Qur'an. In naming the book *Tafsir Al-Bayān fī Ma'rifati Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, KH Shodiq Hamzah said in the *Technical Explanation* by considering several arguments with the term tafaul, as follows:

Nami tafsir ingkang Al-Faqir tulis dipun paringi asma "*Al-Bayānfī Ma'rifati Ma'ani Al-Qur'an*", nami "*Al-Bayan*" dipun pilih Al-faqir keranten tafaul dateng Syekh Abi Thoyib Shidiq Hasan bin Ali Al-Hasani Al-Qonuji Al-Bukhori ingkang nulis tafsir *Fathul Bayan*, soho tafaul dateng Syekh Muhammad Al-Amin bin M. Al-Mukhtar As-Syinkity ingkang ngarang tafsir mawi asma *Adlwau Al-Bayan*. Al-Faqir milih kalimah "*fī Ma'rifati*" puniko tafaul dateng Syekh KH. Bisri Mustofa Rembang ingkang nyeraf tafsir *Al-Ibriz fī Ma'rifati Ma'ani Qur'an Al-'Aziz*. Al-Faqir milih lafal "*Ma'ani Al-Qur'an*" meniko tafaul kaliah Syekh Imam Abi Ja'far An-Nukhasi lan Syekh Ali

⁵Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, Tafsir Al-Bayān Fī Ma'rifati Ma'ani Al-Qur'an, cet.1, juz 1 (Semarang: Asnalitera, 2020), p.viii.

As-Shobuni ingkang ngarang tafsir asmanipun *Ma'ani Al-Qur'an Al-Karimi*".⁶

KH Shodiq Hamzah claims that the naming of the book *Tafsir Al-Bayān fī Ma'rifati Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān* is not only based on material sources, but also reflects the scientific relationship with various diverse sources. He emphasizes that the source of knowledge in this case is the relationship between the teacher and the student, or between the santri and the author of the book, which he learned through a *canad*.⁷ Thus, the source is more ethical in the context of knowledge, not just a material relationship. This shows the nature of *ketawadhu'an* and the relative and dynamic continuity of knowledge.

The conception of praxis morals or *tasawwuf'amali* carried in this book affects most of the content and structure of its presentation. For example, the beginning of each surah always begins with a *fadhilah* that presents an ethical reception of the Qur'an in the form of behavior (performance). For example, before starting the interpretation of Surah Al-Anfal, the *fadhilah* is mentioned:

1. Sopo sing gelem moco surat Al-Anfal mbesuk ono ing dino kiamat oleh syafaate Kanjeng Nabi Muhammad.
2. Bebas songko sifat munafiq, makane disamping kanjeng Nabi maringi syafaat, wongkang maos surat Al-Anfal insyaallah ora tau plin-plan, lan malaikat-malaikat kang mikul Arsy podo nyuwunaken ngapuro maring wongkang moco surat Al-Anfal selagi iseh urip ono ing ndunyo.⁸

Meanwhile, at the end of the interpretation group, the understanding conveyed is not only informative, but also includes forms of ethical behavior that can be applied.

Tafsir Al-Bayān ini shows that source does not necessarily mean reference, but rather the adoption, annotation, or appropriation of information from other texts. For example, the first reference to the

⁶Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir al-Bayān*. 2020, p.xi.

⁷Gusmian et al., *Tafsir Al-Bayan*, p.12-13

⁸Gusmian et al, *Tafsir Al-Bayan*, p.90-91

fadilah of Al-Fatihah does not come from the book of tafsir or works in the discipline of tafsir, but from the practical book *Khazinatul Asrar*, which is not mentioned in the introduction. The chapter on the fadilah mostly refers to secondary books in tafsir, such as the book of hadith.⁹

C. Systematics and Characteristics of *Tafsir al-Bayān*

In general, this tafsir is written in Javanese by using Latin letters to translate and interpret the verses of the Qur'an. *Tafsir al-Bayān* also provides a specific theme for each set of verses. In certain verses, the commentator sometimes includes additional notes on the interpretation, which are in the form of stories, tanbih, muhimmah, asbabun nuzul and others.

The systematics of *Tafsir Al-Bayān* follows the order of the verses in the mushaf, known as mushafi tafsir, starting from Surah Al-Fatihah to Surah An-Nas. The method of interpretation applied in *Tafsir Al-Bayān* is the ijmalī method, which begins with an explanation of the meaning of vocabulary, then followed by a discussion of the general meaning of the verses.

This tafsir can be categorized as a mufrodat tafsir that emphasizes the meaning of each word. This method is very effective in helping to understand the verses of the Qur'an, as well as motivating readers to string the meaning to get the right understanding. Some great scholars also applied this method in interpreting the Qur'an, including Raghīb Al-Asfīhaany in his work *Mufrodat Alfaadh al-Qur'an*, Imam Abdul Qahir Al-Jurjani in *Durjud Duror Fii Tafsiri Aay Was Suwar*, Imam Almaraghi in *Tafsir Al Maraghi*, Sheikh Wahbah Azzuhaily in *Tafsir al Munir*, and Sheikh Muhammad Ali as Shobuni in *Shofwatut Tafaasir*. Among Nusantara scholars who also focus on the meaning of mufrodat

⁹Gusmian et al, *Tafsir Al-Bayan*, p.11

is KH A. Musthofa Bisri in his book *al Ubairiz fi Tafsiir Gharaaib al-Qur'an al Aziz*.¹⁰

In terms of approach and style of interpretation, *Tafsir Al-Bayān* tends to lead to adabi-ijtima'i interpretation and covers legal, social, and Sufism issues. In *Tafsir Al Bayan Fii Ma'rifati Ma'ani Al-Qur'an*, the hermeneutic style is reflected through the selection of titles or interpretive themes that lead to two main motives: instilling moral values and emphasizing the dimensions of Muslim worship. For example, the title of the first five verses of QS. Al-Baqarah as "*Sifate Mukminin lan Piwalese Wongkang Podo Taqwa*" (Attributes of the Believers and Retaliation for the Pious) shows the mufassir's attempt to highlight the universal or global message about the character of piety and the spiritual consequences of piety.¹¹ *Tafsir Al-Bayān* is included in the categorization of tafsir that uses the *bi al-ma'sur* form. This category can be seen from the dominance of the sources of interpretation that refer to various narrations in classical interpretations that are *bi al-ma'sur*.

The book of interpretation *Al-Bayān* by KH Shodiq Hamzah is a prominent work in the interpretation of the Qur'an, because the method of interpretation used in the book of interpretation *Al-Bayān* shows its own uniqueness among other works of interpretation, especially in terms of structured and systematic writing. Each verse is not only interpreted separately, but also grouped based on certain themes, which makes it easier for readers to understand the context and broader meaning of the verses and readers not only get an understanding of the literal meaning, but also can capture thematic messages contained in the Qur'an. In addition, information related to the asbabun nuzul of the

¹⁰Ahmad Baidowi dan Yuni Ma'rufah, "Dinamika Karya Tafsir Al-Qur'an Pesantren Jawa," *Al-Itqon: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an* 8, no. 2 (2022): p.258–263. Doi: <https://ejournal.staialanwar.ac.id/index.php/itqon/issue/view/19>

¹¹Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 1, 2020, p.5

verse is also included, providing the historical background of each revealed revelation, so that readers can relate the meaning of the verse to the situation and conditions when the verse was revealed.

The writing using the Javanese Pegon language in Latin script is also one of the main attractions, because it makes it more accessible to the wider community, especially millennials and those who are not familiar with Arabic. Thus, the tafsir *Al-Bayān* exegesis os not only functions as a tafsir, but also as a bridge to introduce the values of the Qur'an to the younger generation in Indonesia.

D. The Verses of Balā' In the Qur'an and Their Interpretation in Tafsir Al-Bayan

1. The Verses of Bala'

The word balā' and its derivatives are mentioned in the Qur'an 36 times, and out of that number, 34 times are directly related to the topic of this research, which is about balā' as a form of trial in the perspective of the Qur'an.¹² The variations in the form (ṣīghah) of the word include several grammatical types: 7 verses use the fi'il māḍī form (past tense verb), 20 verses use the fi'il muḍāri' form (present or future tense verb), 1 verse uses the fi'il amr form (imperative verb), 6 verses use the isim form (noun), and 2 verses appear in the isim fā'il form (agent noun). This variety of forms demonstrates the flexibility of using the word balā' in various semantic and thematic contexts in the Qur'an while still adhering to its fundamental meaning as a test or trial from Allah SWT. Here is a table presenting the verses of balā' divided into their various forms (ṣīghah):

¹²Muhammad Fuad Abdul Baqi, *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li Alfāz al-Qur'ān*, (Kairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1945), p.135–136.

Various Forms Of Bala'	Verse Of The Quran	Ṣīghah
Fi'il Māḍī form (past tense verb)	QS. Al-Qalam:17; QS. Al-Baqarah:124; QS. Al-A'raf:168; QS. Al-Ahzab:11; QS. Al-Fajr:15,16	بَلَّوْنَاهُمْ, بَلَّوْنَا, اِبْتَلَى, اِبْتَلَاهُ
Fi'il Muḍāri' form (present or future tense verb)	QS. Al-Baqarah:155; QS. Ali Imran:152,154,186; QS. Al-Maidah:48,94; QS. Al-An'am:165; Al-A'raf:163; Al-Anfal:17; QS. Yunus:30; QS. Hud:7; QS. An-Nahl:92; QS. Al-Kahfi:7; QS. Al-Anbiya':35; QS. An-Naml:40; QS. Muhammad:4,31; QS. Al-Mulk:2; QS. Al-Insan:2; QS. Al-Thariq:9;	لَيَبْلُوكُمْ, نَبْلُوهُمْ, لَيَبْتَلِي, لَيَبْتَلُونَ, لَيَبْلُوكُمْ, لَيَبْلُوكُمْ, نَبْلُوهُمْ, وَلَيَبْتَلِي, لَيَبْلُوكُمْ, نَبْلُوهُمْ, نَبْلُو, يَبْلُوكُمْ, لَيَبْلُونِي, نَبْتَلِيهِ, تُبْلَى
Fi'il Amr form (imperative verb)	QS. An-Nisa':6	اِبْتَلُ
The Isim form (noun)	QS. Al-Saffat:106; QS. Al-Baqarah:49; Al-A'raf:141; QS. Ibrahim:6; QS. Al-Dukhan:33;	بَلَاءٌ
The Isim Fā'il form (agent noun)	Al-Mu'minun:30; QS. Al-Baqarah:249;	مُبْتَلٍ

2. Definition of Balā' in Tafsir Al-Bayān

In the Qur'an, the term balā' is understood as a form of test that Allah gives to humans in various conditions and situations of life. KH. Shodiq Hamzah in Tafsir Al-Bayān divides this test into two main forms: first, balā' in the form of good and bad, which are tests that come through both pleasant and difficult conditions; and second, balā' in the form of commands and prohibitions, which are tests that present themselves through moral responsibilities and obedience to the sharia. These two forms encompass all aspects of human life, both in the material and spiritual dimensions.

The calamity of misfortune in Tafsir al-Bayān by KH. Shodiq Hamzah is understood as a trial that outwardly appears detrimental, such as fear, hunger, lack of wealth, life, and defeat in battle, but in essence, it contains profound pedagogical and spiritual values. QS. Al-Baqarah: 155, for example, describes this *balā'* as a form of trial after the Battle of Badr that demands patience and steadfastness of faith, not merely as a calamity.¹³

In this interpretation, KH. Shodiq links the meaning of *balā'* with Javanese philosophy through the expression “*Dunyo iku omah panggonan ujian lan cobaan*,” which emphasizes that the world is a place for self-discipline, not a space for seeking pleasure. Meanwhile, QS. Āli ‘Imrān: 152 presents the calamity of evil as a consequence of disobedience and love for the world (*ngersa’ake dunya*), as occurred in the defeat of the Battle of Uhud. Javanese terms such as “*sebar-sebar keplayu*” (the scattering of ranks) and “*perenco-perencoan*” (a chaotic strategy) illustrate the social and spiritual impact of the misalignment between human actions and God's will. Thus, the calamity of evil is seen as a sign or warning from God for humans to return to the right path, as a way to cultivate wisdom through patience, sincerity, and piety.¹⁴

The trial of goodness in Tafsir al-Bayān by KH. Shodiq Hamzah is interpreted as a test in the form of blessings, assistance, or opportunities that seem advantageous, but contain a message of divine education (*tarbiyah*). In QS. Al-Baqarah: 49, the rescue of the Children of Israel from Fir’aun is referred to as *balā’un ‘azīm* and translated as “*kang banget gedene/abote*,” emphasizing the heaviness of the trial even though it took the form of salvation.

¹³ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 2, 2020, p.10-13.

¹⁴ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 4, 2020, p.41-46.

This is in line with the Javanese philosophy "*urip iku kanggo nggulawenthah ati*" (life is a process of inner cultivation).¹⁵

QS. Al-Mā'idah: 94 describes a trial in the form of a light temptation that tests integrity, such as game animals while in ihram. Javanese terms like "*ndelalah kewan alasan nyedak*" reflect the philosophy of "*kahanan kang nyoba batin*" (tests can come from deceptive pleasures).¹⁶ In QS. Al-Anfāl: 17, the victory in the Battle of Badr is interpreted as *balā' hasanah*, God's assistance that tests faith. The expression "*iku mateni Gusti Allah*" emphasizes that success is not solely the result of one's own efforts, in line with the value of "*menang tanpo ngasorake*."¹⁷

QS. Āli 'Imrān: 186 shows that the world can be a test with the deception of pleasures. KH. Shodiq used metaphors such as "*mbujuk*" and "*pang kayu dilebokke ing badan*" to illustrate the heaviness of worldly trials and the agony of death. This aligns with the Javanese view that "*dunyo iku panggonan laku*," a place to undergo inner tests. Thus, the calamity of goodness is a form of hidden test within blessings, demanding awareness, gratitude, and patience, reinforced by the values of Javanese local wisdom.¹⁸

In addition to these two forms of *balā'*, Tafsir al-Bayān by KH. Shodiq Hamzah also explains *balā'* in the form of commands and prohibitions as a fundamental test in human life. This test is called *al-ibtilā' al-tashrī'i*, which is a test given through the burden of Sharia: the command to do good and the prohibition to avoid wrongdoing. This type of trial serves as a parameter to assess the extent to which humans obey the laws of Allah, while also demonstrating their sincerity in piety.

¹⁵ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 1, 2020, p.35-38.

¹⁶ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 7, 2020, p.7-10

¹⁷ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 9, 2020, p.99-102

¹⁸ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 4, 2020, p.68-70

KH. Shodiq understands this type of trial as a process of divine education (*tarbiyah ilāhiyyah*) that demands obedience and sincerity. In his interpretation of QS. Al-Baqarah: 124, he interprets the test of Prophet Ibrahim a.s. as a form of *balā'* that perfects the qualities of faith and leadership. Although someone may come from a lineage of prophets, they do not automatically become a role model if they are unjust or sinful. This also serves as a criticism of the Jews and Christians who feel more entitled to prophethood due to their lineage. KH. Shodiq translated it contextually with a direct admonition to the Jews, Christians, and the pagans of Mecca not to envy the prophethood of Muhammad SAW, because faith is the measure, not lineage alone.¹⁹

Furthermore, QS. Al-A'rāf: 163 also describes *balā'* in the form of prohibition: the Jews were forbidden to catch fish on Saturday. In Tafsir al-Bayān, KH. Shodiq refers to this event as a form of trial (test) of their obedience. He divided the people into three groups: the violators, the admonishers, and those who chose to remain silent. The third group not only ignored the prohibition but also neglected to prevent wrongdoing. In Javanese philosophy, such an attitude is illustrated through the saying "*urip kang ora sareh bakal nampa balane dhewe*," which means that a life lived carelessly will reap its own consequences.²⁰

KH. Shodiq also emphasized that this form of *balā'* is more subtle yet profound, as it tests a person's intentions, commitment, and integrity in adhering to the sharia. He wrote that the world is a "*papan nggulawenthah batin*" a place where humans are spiritually forged through the moral choices they face every day. Thus, *balā'* in the form of commands and prohibitions not only represents the

¹⁹ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 1, 2020, p.97-100

²⁰ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 9, 2020, p.56-59

responsibility of sharia but also serves as a path for character formation and true faith that is reflected in real actions.

3. The Variety of Balā' in Tafsir Al-Bayān

a. *Balā'* (test) That Takes the Form of Badness

Balā' in the form of adversity is a test that comes through suffering, difficulties, and pressures both physically and mentally. Some verses of the Qur'an describe this form of balā' as part of the process of strengthening faith, purifying the heart, and reinforcing patience.

One of the very clear illustrations can be found in QS. Al-Baqarah verse 155:

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ
وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِيرٍ الصَّابِرِينَ

Meaning: We will surely test you with a little fear and hunger, and a loss of wealth, lives, and fruits. Convey (O Prophet Muhammad,) the good news to the patient²¹

In this verse, Allah states that He will test humans with fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives, and fruits. This verse emphasizes the importance of patience as the primary response to these heavy trials, with the promise of glad tidings from Allah for those who are patient. Tafsir al-Bayān by KH. Shodiq Hamzah interprets this verse as an affirmation that trials (balā') are an inevitability in the temporary and trial-filled life of this world. This test serves not only to test patience but also as a means of divine education (*tarbiyah ilāhiyyah*) to strengthen faith and purify the soul. Interestingly, in his interpretation, KH. Shodiq Hamzah uses local Javanese terms to explain the context of balā'. He stated, “*Dunyo iku*

²¹Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an (LPMQ), *Qur'an Kemenag* (Jakarta: LPMQ, 2022), <https://quran.kemenag.go.id>.

omah panggonan ujian lan cobaan, pramilo Gusti Allah dhawuh supoyo podo sabar”²² This explanation shows that the world is understood as a place of trials and tests, a typical expression in Javanese culture that reflects the local understanding that life is a place of trials that must be endured with patience. The recommended attitude is patience and acceptance, which means facing trials with an open heart and inner peace.

Furthermore, KH. Shodiq Hamzah also mentioned that the greatest form of calamity is not the loss of wealth or life, but rather the loss of faith and submission to religion, as explained in the statement: “*Musibah kang paling gede yoiku musibah kang ora nuturi agomo Islam... iki diarani musibah kang paling gede-gedene musibah.*”²³ This expression resonates with the Javanese philosophy of “*ilang urip sejati*,” which means the loss of true life direction. Thus, the interpretation of *balā’* in *Tafsir al-Bayān* is not only rich spiritually but also contextually through the integration of local Javanese wisdom values.

Another example can be found in QS. Al-Baqarah verse 249, here is the verse:

فَلَمَّا فَصَلَ طَالُوتُ بِالْجُنُودِ قَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُبْتَلِيكُمْ بِنَهَرٍ فَمَنْ شَرِبَ مِنْهُ فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي وَمَنْ لَمْ يَطْعَمْهُ فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي إِلَّا مَنِ اعْتَرَفَ غُرْفَةً بِيَدِهِ ۚ فَشَرِبُوا مِنْهُ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا مِّنْهُمْ ۚ فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَهُ هُوَ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ ۚ قَالُوا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا الْيَوْمَ بِجَالُوتَ وَجُنُودِهِ ۚ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يَظُنُّونَ أَنَّهُمْ مُلْقَاوُاَ اللَّهِ ۚ كَمْ مِنْ فِئَةٍ قَلِيلَةٍ غَلَبَتْ فِئَةً كَثِيرَةً ۚ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

²² Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 2, 2020, p.12

²³ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 2, 2020, p.13

Meaning: So, when Talut set out with his army, he said, "Indeed, Allah will test you with a river. Whoever drinks from it is not of me, and whoever does not drink from it is of me, except for one who scoops up a handful with his hand." But they drank from it, except for a few of them. When he (Talut) and those who believed with him crossed the river, they said, "We have no strength today against Jalut and his soldiers." Those who were certain they would meet Allah said, "How many a small group has overcome a large group by the permission of Allah." Indeed, Allah is with the patient.²⁴

The verse about the test of Ṭālūt's army illustrates how Allah tested their faith by prohibiting them from drinking the river water, except for a little. This test becomes a spiritual selection; only those who are patient and steadfast can endure. In Tafsir al-Bayān, KH. Shodiq Hamzah titled the interpretation of this verse: "*Netepaken Ratu Tholut lan Tholut Nyubo Piro-Piro Pengikute; Golongan Sithik Biso Nglahake Golongan Akeh*," which emphasizes that trials are part of Allah's decree to test faith. In his interpretation, it is mentioned: "*Iku nyubo sopo Allah ing siro kabeh*," which is a typical Javanese expression to describe balā' as a direct test from Allah. This interpretation shows that victory does not depend on numbers, but on the steadfastness of faith in facing trials. This story also reinforces the meaning of balā' as a tool of spiritual selection to attain help and glory from Allah.²⁵

Another heavy trial is described in QS. Ali 'Imrān verse 152:

²⁴Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an (LPMQ), *Qur'an Kemenag* (Jakarta: LPMQ, 2022), <https://quran.kemenag.go.id>

²⁵Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 2, 2020, p.96-97

وَلَقَدْ صَدَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ ۚ إِذْ تَحُسُّونَهُم بِإِذْنِهِ ۚ هَلْ يَكُنْ لَكُمْ إِذَا
 فَشَلْتُمْ وَتَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ وَعَصَيْتُمْ مِمَّنْ بَعْدَ مَا أَرْكَبُ مَا تُحِبُّونَ ۚ مِنْكُمْ
 مَن يُرِيدُ الدُّنْيَا وَمِنْكُمْ مَن يُرِيدُ الْآخِرَةَ ۚ ثُمَّ صَرَفَكُمْ عَنْهُمْ لِيَبْتَلِيَكُمْ ۚ وَلَقَدْ
 عَفَا عَنْكُمْ ۚ وَاللَّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

Meaning: Indeed, Allah has truly fulfilled His promise to you when you killed them with His permission until the time you were (in a state of) weakness, disputing in the matter, and disobeying (the command of the Messenger) after Allah showed you what you like. Among you are those who desire the world and among you are those who desire the Hereafter. Then, Allah turned you away from them to test you. Indeed, He has truly forgiven you. God has bestowed grace upon the believers.

QS. Āli ‘Imrān verse 152 explains the defeat of the Muslims in the Battle of Uhud as a consequence of weakness, discord, and disobedience to the Prophet’s command after they saw the war booty they desired. This verse emphasizes that the defeat was a test from Allah to distinguish between those who desire the world and those who hope for the Hereafter. In Tafsir al-Bayān, KH. Shodiq Hamzah titled the interpretation of this verse as: *"Sebar-sebar Keplayune Wong Islam Ketika Perang Uhud lan Perenco-Perencone Bubare Kaum Muslimin Naliko Peperangan"* In his interpretation, he mentions: *“kerono arahe nyubo sopo Allah ing siro kabeh,”* which contextually means *balā’* as a direct test from God on the faith and obedience of Muslims. This expression reflects the understanding of *balā’* in the Javanese cultural context as a divine trial aimed at filtering sincerity and testing the steadfastness of faith. Although they fell into this trial, Allah continues to convey that He has

granted forgiveness and continues to bestow His blessings upon the faithful.²⁶

Still in the context of the Battle of Uhud, Surah Ali 'Imran verse 154 mentions:

ثُمَّ أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ الْغَمِّ أَمْنَةً نُعَاسًا يَعْشَىٰ طَائِفَةٌ مِّنْكُمْ ۖ
وَطَائِفَةٌ قَدْ أَهَمَّتْهُمْ أَنفُسُهُمْ يَظُنُّونَ بِاللَّهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ ظَنَّ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ ۚ يَقُولُونَ
هَلْ لَّنَا مِنَ الْأَمْرِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۗ قُلْ إِنَّ الْأَمْرَ كُلَّهُ ۖ لِلَّهِ ۚ يُخْفُونَ فِي أَنفُسِهِم
مَا لَا يُبْدُونَ لَكَ ۚ يَقُولُونَ لَوْ كَانِ لَنَا مِنَ الْأَمْرِ شَيْءٌ ۖ مَا قُتِلْنَا هَاهُنَا ۚ
قُلْ لَوْ كُنْتُمْ فِي بُيُوتِكُمْ لَبَرَزَ الَّذِينَ كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَتْلُ إِلَىٰ مَضَاجِعِهِمْ ۚ
وَلِيَبْتَلِيَ اللَّهُ مَا فِي صُدُورِكُمْ وَلِيُمَحَّصَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ
الصُّدُورِ

Meaning: After you were struck by sorrow, then He sent down a sense of security to you (in the form of) sleep that enveloped a group of you, while another group was anxious about themselves. They harbor false suspicions about Allah, like the suspicions of the Jahiliyyah. They said, "Is there anything we can do in this matter?" Say (Prophet Muhammad), "Indeed, all matters are in the hands of Allah." They conceal in their hearts what they do not explain to you. They said, "If there was anything we could do in this matter, we would not have been killed (defeated) here." Say (Prophet Muhammad), "If you had been in your houses, those who were destined to be killed would have gone out to the places where they were killed." Allah (did this) to test what is in your hearts and to purify what is in your hearts. Allah is All-Knowing of what is in the hearts.²⁷ Surah Al-Imran verse 154 describes the situation after the defeat in the Battle of Uhud, when some Muslims were granted a sense of security by Allah in the form of calming drowsiness, while others were engulfed in anxiety, suspicion, and bad assumptions about Allah, like the Jahiliyyah people. This verse

²⁶Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 4, 2020, p.41-42

²⁷Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an (LPMQ), *Qur'an Kemenag* (Jakarta: LPMQ, 2022), <https://quran.kemenag.go.id>.

shows that within a community, responses to calamities (balā') can vary, depending on each individual's level of faith. In Tafsir al-Bayān, KH. Shodiq Hamzah mentions that this state is a form of "*lan supoyo nyubo sopo Allah ing barang kang tetep ingndalem dodo/ati siro kabeh (songko ikhlas lan munafiq)*," which means a test from Allah to reveal the contents of the human heart, to distinguish who is patient and who still harbors doubts.²⁸ Balā' in this context is not only physical suffering but also a profound inner and psychological test.

The reason for the revelation of this verse is narrated by the companion Zubair, who recounted that during the Battle of Uhud, he and the companions felt very afraid, so much so that they bowed their heads in despair and wanted to sleep. When Mu'attib bin Qusyair said, "*Lamun kito nduwe ikhtiar mestine kito ora metu perang*," it showed doubt about Allah's decree. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) then explained that even if they were at home, if it was destined for them to die on the battlefield, that destiny would still come to pass. Then this verse was revealed to emphasize that everything that happens is part of balā', which is a test from Allah, so that the contents of the hearts and the level of faith of His servants become apparent.²⁹

Thus, these verses illustrate that bala' in the form of misfortunes have many faces: ranging from life's difficulties, the bala' of war, inner conflicts, to temptations against prohibitions. All of them aim to test the sincerity of faith, strengthen patience, and cleanse the heart from inner diseases.

²⁸ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 4, 2020, p.44

²⁹ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 4, 2020, p.46

The Tafsir Al-Bayān provides a profound interpretation of these verses, emphasizing the historical and social context, as well as their relevance to the dynamics of humanity throughout the ages.

b. *Balā* (test) That Takes The Form of Goodness

Verses in the Qur'an that use the term *balā'* provide a diverse depiction of the forms of trials experienced by humanity, both historically and spiritually. Surah Al-Baqarah verse 49 reads:

وَإِذْ نَجَّيْنَاكُمْ مِّنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ يُدَبِّحُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ ۚ وَفِي ذَٰلِكُمْ بَلَاءٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ

Meaning: (Remember) when We saved you from (Fir'aun and) Fir'aun followers. They inflicted very severe punishment upon you. They slaughtered your male children and let your female children live. In this, there is a great trial from your Lord.³⁰

Surah Al-Baqarah verse 49 reminds of the great blessing given by Allah to the Children of Israel, which is when they were saved from the tyranny of Fir'aun and his followers who cruelly tortured them slaughtering their male children and letting their females live. In Tafsir al-Bayān, KH. Shodiq Hamzah explains that this event is part of the series "*Nikmat-Nikmate Allah Kang Jumlahe 10 Tumeraping Maring Wong Yahudi*" and this verse contains one of the five blessings mentioned explicitly.³¹

The interpretation states that the salvation of the Children of Israel from Fir'aun's pursuit is part of "*balā'-balā'ne*," which refers to various heavy trials from God that contain spiritual lessons. In the interpretation, it is explained: "*Lan iku tetep ing dalem mengkono adzab utawi cubo... kang banget gedene*,"

³⁰Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an (LPMQ), *Qur'an Kemenag* (Jakarta: LPMQ, 2022), <https://quran.kemenag.go.id>.

³¹ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 1, 2020, p.35

emphasizing that the *balā'* here is not just physical suffering, but also a means of great divine education.³² Therefore, this event serves as evidence that in every great disaster, there are contained wisdom, tests of faith, and signs of God's mercy that liberate and guide His people.

QS. Al-Mā'idah verse 94 states:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَيَبْلُوَنَّكُمُ اللَّهُ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الصَّيْدِ تَنَالَهُ أَيْدِيكُمْ
وَمَا حُكْمُ اللَّهِ مَن يَخَافُهُ ۖ بِالْغَيْبِ ۖ فَمَنِ اعْتَدَىٰ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَلَهُ
عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

Meaning: O you who have believed, indeed, Allah will surely test you with something of the game that your hands and your spears capture, that Allah may make evident those who fear Him among you and those who are disobedient. And whoever transgresses after that - for him is a painful punishment.³³

Surah Al-Mā'idah verse 94 describes a test of faith for Muslims when they are in a state of *ihram*. In that condition, Allah brought the game animals close to them, even though outwardly the animals were easy to catch. However, the prohibition on hunting remains in effect as a form of test of inner honesty and self-control, even when no one is watching. In Tafsir al-Bayān, this verse is titled "*Beburon Naliko Waktu Nyandang Ihrom lan Damai Mateni Hewan Daratan*," and KH. Shodiq Hamzah explains that this event is "*demi yekti yento nyubo ing siro kabeh*," which is a form of *balā'* (trial) from Allah to test who truly fears Him.³⁴

³² Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 4, 2020, p.35-38

³³ Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an (LPMQ), *Qur'an Kemenag* (Jakarta: LPMQ, 2022), <https://quran.kemenag.go.id>.

³⁴ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 7, 2020, p.10

The reason for the revelation of this verse is narrated by Ibn Abi Hatim from Imam Muqotil, who mentioned that the verse was revealed when the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and his companions were on their Umrah journey and stopped at Hudaibiyah. At that time, many birds and wild animals approached, as if making it easy for them to be hunted, but Allah imposed the prohibition as a test. Thus, this verse shows that *balā'* is not always in the form of suffering, but can also present itself as ease that contains prohibitions, to test a person's integrity and piety.³⁵

A similar test is also recorded in QS. Al-A'rāf verse 141, which is narratively similar to QS. Al-Baqarah verse 49. Here is the text of the verse:

وَإِذْ أَنْجَيْنَاكُمْ مِنْ آلِ فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ يُقْتُلُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ نِسَاءَكُمْ وَفِي ذَلِكُمْ بَلَاءٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ

Meaning: (Remember, O Children of Israel) when We saved you from the followers of Fir'aun who were tormenting you with the worst torment. They killed your male children and let your female children live. In that, there is a great trial from your Lord.³⁶

This verse once again alludes to the salvation of the Children of Israel from the tyranny of Fir'aun, and emphasizes that the suffering they previously experienced was a "*utawi cubo*" a great test from God filled with lessons. In Tafsir al-Bayān, this verse is included in the section titled "*Wong-wong Bani Isroil Ngingkari Nikmat-Nikmate Gusti Allah*" and it is explained that although they had experienced great suffering

³⁵ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 7, 2020, p.13

³⁶ Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an (LPMQ), *Qur'an Kemenag* (Jakarta: LPMQ, 2022), <https://quran.kemenag.go.id>.

and were saved by God, they still showed a disbelieving attitude.³⁷

The interpretation highlights how the Israelites, despite having received extraordinary blessings, such as salvation from Fir'aun's torment, actually asked Prophet Moses to make them an idol besides Allah. This serves as evidence that trials (balā') in the form of suffering will have no effect if not accompanied by awareness and gratitude. Prophet Moses even condemned them as a foolish people (إنكم قوم تجهلون) and warned that idol worship would only lead to destruction (إن هؤلاء متبر ما هم فيه). Therefore, this verse teaches that trials (balā') are not only a means of purification but also a revelation of how far humans can be grateful and steadfast in faith after receiving help from Allah.³⁸

Meanwhile, QS. Al-Anfāl verse 17 presents the meaning of balā' in the context of warfare. Here is the verse:

فَلَمْ تَقْتُلُوهُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ قَتَلَهُمْ وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَىٰ
وَلِيُبَيِّنَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْهُ بَلَاءٌ حَسَنًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

Meaning: So, (actually) it was not you who killed them, but Allah who killed them, and it was not you who threw when you threw, but Allah who threw. (Allah did this to destroy them) and to grant victory to the believers with a good victory. Indeed, Allah is All-Hearing and All-Knowing.³⁹

This verse was revealed in the context of the Battle of Badr, when Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) took a handful of sand and threw it towards the Quraysh forces, causing dust to hit their faces. Although it was the Prophet who threw, Allah

³⁷Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 9, 2020, p.30

³⁸Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 9, 2020, p.32-33

³⁹Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an (LPMQ), *Qur'an Kemenag* (Jakarta: LPMQ, 2022), <https://quran.kemenag.go.id>.

emphasized that "*ora siro kang mbalang, nanging Allah kang mbalang*" as a symbol that victory comes entirely from His help. In Tafsir Al-Bayān, this verse is found in the section titled "*Mlayu Songko Perang lan Pitulung Sangking Gusti Allah*," and it is explained that this moment is a tangible manifestation of *balā' ḥasanan*, God's good test for the believers.⁴⁰

This test, although in the form of victory, still carries the value of faith responsibility, because victory is not the end of the struggle, but the beginning of proving sincerity and steadfastness in faith. Thus, this verse emphasizes that *balā'* is not always in the form of calamities or hardships, but can also be in the form of victories that serve as a means of filtering and proving the quality of faith.⁴¹

Furthermore, QS. Ali 'Imrān verse 186 also reinforces this understanding by explaining that humans will be tested through wealth, life, and disturbances from external parties, and that patience and piety are the main attitudes that must be upheld in facing these tests. Here is the verse:

لَتَبْلُوَنَّ فِيْ أَمْوَالِكُمْ وَأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَلَتَسْمَعَنَّ مِنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَمِنَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا أَذًى كَثِيْرًا ۖ وَإِنْ تَصْبِرُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ

Meaning: You will surely be tested in your wealth and yourselves. You will also surely hear many things that are very painful to the heart from those who were given the Scripture before you and from the polytheists. If you are patient and pious, indeed, that is among the matters that should be prioritized.⁴²

⁴⁰ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 9, 2020, p.99

⁴¹ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 9, 2020, p.99-102

⁴² Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an (LPMQ), *Qur'an Kemenag* (Jakarta: LPMQ, 2022), <https://quran.kemenag.go.id>.

This verse contains the meaning that trials (balā') are not only in the form of physical difficulties and material losses, but also in the form of social pressures, worldly temptations, and verbal disturbances from outside the Islamic community. In Tafsir Al-Bayān, this verse is found in a section titled "*Kabeh wong iku ngincipi mati lan mbesuk ing dino kiamat oleh ganjaran, lan ing ndunyo oleh cobaan*," which explains that life in this world is a space for testing. The sentence "*yekti dicobo temen siro kabeh*" emphasizes that worldly trials are an inevitability for every human being.⁴³

This interpretation highlights that the world is merely a temporary stop filled with deception, whereas the hereafter is the eternal final destination. Trials in the form of wealth (bondo), worldly temptations, and inner pressures are all intended to test the extent to which humans can manage trust and remain steadfast in obedience. In fact, in this interpretation, it is mentioned that the world is a trial for the believers, and only those who channel their wealth towards *sabiilil khoirat*, *mashoolihul a'mmah*, and matters that are beneficial and blessed are considered to have successfully faced this trial.⁴⁴

Thus, this series of verses shows that balā' not only means suffering but can also be blessings, ease, and even victory. All forms of trials aim to measure the extent to which a person submits, is grateful, and remains steadfast in faith. The interpretation of Tafsir Al-Bayān provides a local nuance that enriches the understanding of the meaning of balā' through grounded and contextual Javanese expressions, making this

⁴³ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 4, 2020, p.68-69

⁴⁴ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, p.69-70

interpretation highly relevant to the social dynamics of the Muslim community.

c. **Balā' In The Form Of Commands And Prohibitions**

One of the most fundamental forms of test in human life is the test through the commands and prohibitions set by Allah. This type of test holds a very important position because it serves as a means to measure the extent of human obedience to divine rules, which is reflected in the provisions of halal and haram laws. It is not surprising that various classical and contemporary fiqh books begin their discussions from this framework, as it serves as the main foundation in human interaction with the guidance of sharia.

Allah SWT has affirmed that the creation of humans, the heavens and the earth, as well as the dynamics of life and death, are not without purpose. All of that is part of the Divine test mechanism to assess the quality of human deeds. This is emphasized in His word:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ
الْعَفُورُ

Meaning: "He who created death and life to test you, which of you is best in deed. He is the Exalted in Might, the Most Forgiving." (QS. Al-Mulk: 2).⁴⁵

This verse serves as a theological basis that every human undergoes a test designed not only in the form of physical or material suffering but also in the form of obedience to divine law. QS. Al-Mulk verse 2 states: "Who created death and life, that He may test you which of you is best in deed." The test is not only in the form of hardship but also in the form of ease,

⁴⁵Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an (LPMQ), *Qur'an Kemenag* (Jakarta: LPMQ, 2022), <https://quran.kemenag.go.id>

commands, and prohibitions. All of which demand steadfastness of heart and sincerity of faith.⁴⁶

In Tafsir Al-Bayān, this verse is titled “*Pangeran Allah Kang Nggawe Urip lan Mati, Kang Nyubo Ing Manungsa Sopo Kang Luwih Apik Amalipun.*” The word *balā’* in this verse is interpreted as: “Allah tests you all” (*Allah menguji kalian*). This interpretation explains that *balā’* can appear in the form of commands that seem easy but actually test sincerity and discipline, as well as prohibitions that seem light but are heavy if faith is not strong.⁴⁷

In his interpretation, KH. Shodiq Hamzah mentioned that life and death are not coincidental, but rather part of how God tests His servants. With this, humans are invited to realize that life itself is a field of trials, and death is the door to evaluation. The interpretation of *balā’* in this verse is also inseparable from the spiritual and moral dimensions, as Allah wants to see who is “*ahsanu ‘amala*” (the best in deeds), not merely the most in deeds. Thus, obedience to Allah's laws, whether in times of ease or hardship is the primary response to the test referred to in this verse.⁴⁸

One form of trial that demonstrates the depth and breadth of the meaning of *balā’* in the Qur'an is the trial through tasks and commands that come directly from Allah SWT. This trial is not only in the form of physical suffering or life's difficulties but even deeper, in the form of trust, religious responsibility, and obedience to divine decrees. In Surah Al-Baqarah/2:124, Allah says:

⁴⁶ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 29, 2020, p.7

⁴⁷ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 29, 2020, p.7-

⁴⁸ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, p.8-9

وَإِذِ ابْتَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَبُّهُ بِكَلِمَاتٍ فَأَتَمَّهُنَّ ۖ قَالَ إِنِّي جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ
إِمَامًا ۗ قَالَ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي ۖ قَالَ لَا يَنَالُ عَهْدِي الظَّالِمِينَ ۚ

Meaning: (Remember) when Ibrahim was tested by his Lord with several commands, and he fulfilled them perfectly. He (Allah) said, "Indeed, I have made you a leader for all mankind." He (Ibrahim) said, "(And I ask You) also for my descendants." Allah said, "(Your request is granted, but) My covenant does not include the wrongdoers."

This verse emphasizes that Prophet Ibrahim was tested with various forms of obedience, which he perfected, until he was granted a high position as a leader of the people. This shows that tests in the form of religious commands can be a path to a noble position in the sight of Allah.

In Tafsir Al-Bayān, this verse is titled: "*Di Ujine Nabi Ibrahim lan Keistimewane Baitul Harom lan Keutamaane Kota Mekkah.*" The word *balā'* in this verse is interpreted with a direct quote: "*Lan elingo siro Muhammad nalikane nyubo*" indicating that the test came directly from Allah as a form of verification of Prophet Ibrahim's sincerity of faith and obedience.⁴⁹

This interpretation also highlights the social context, conveying a message to the Jews, Christians, and pagans of Mecca not to feel superior just because they are descendants of Prophet Ibrahim. KH. Shodiq Hamzah emphasized that "*Allah ora bakal ngangkat turunane wong kang dadi panutan masyarakat yen turunan mau podo dzolim, podo kafir lan podo ahli maksiat.*" In other words, the calamity in the form of religious commands carried out perfectly is the main requirement to attain spiritual glory, not merely lineage.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 1, 2020, p.97-98

⁵⁰ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, p.99

Furthermore, in QS. Muhammad/47:31 Allah says:

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ حَتَّى نَعْلَمَ الْمُجْتَهِدِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَنَبْلُوَ أَخْبَارَكُمْ

Meaning: Indeed, We will certainly test you to know those among you who strive and are patient, and to make evident the news about you." "And indeed, We will test you so that We may know who among you truly strives and is patient, and to make your state evident."

This verse emphasizes that Prophet Ibrahim was tested with various forms of obedience, which he perfected, until he was granted a high position as the leader of the people. This shows that tests in the form of religious commands can be a path to a noble position in the sight of Allah.

In Tafsir Al-Bayān, this verse is titled: "*Tingkahe Wong Munafiq Nalikane Sakwuse Kufur lan Nalikane Dijabutake Nyawane lan Pepilang Kelawan Hikmahe Jihad*," The word *balā'* in this verse is interpreted with a direct quote: "*Lanyekti nyubo sopo ingsun ing siro kabeh*," which indicates that the trial came directly from Allah as a form of verification of Prophet Ibrahim's sincerity of faith and obedience.⁵¹

This interpretation also highlights the social and historical dimensions, namely a reprimand for the Jews, Christians, and the polytheists of Mecca not to feel superior just because of their lineage from Prophet Ibrahim. KH. Shodiq Hamzah emphasized that "*Allah ora bakal ngangkat turunane wongkang dadi panutan masyarakat yen turunan mau podo dzolim, podo kafir lan podo ahli maksiat*."⁵²

Thus, *balā'* is not limited to physical suffering, but also includes inner, social, and spiritual tests all intended to filter

⁵¹ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 26, 2020, p.45-48

⁵² Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, p.48-49

and elevate the status of humans based on true faith and obedience, not merely on lineage or outward status.

4. Attitude towards Balā' according to Tafsir Al-Bayān

In *Tafsir al-Bayān fī Ma'rifati Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, KH. Shodiq Hamzah teaches that balā' (trial) is part of tarbiyah ilāhiyyah (spiritual education from Allah) that must be faced with the right inner and social attitudes. The main way to respond to balā' according to him is with patience (ṣabr), sincerity (ikhlāṣ), obedience (ṭā'ah), and gratitude (shukr). KH. Shodiq conveyed that when Allah tests humans, the purpose is not to torture, but to purify the soul, elevate their status, and distinguish the sincerity of faith.

First, patience becomes the main attitude when facing balā' in the form of suffering or calamity. In QS. Ali 'Imran: 152 about the defeat in the Battle of Uhud, KH. Shodiq explains that the defeat was a test from Allah (li-yabtaliyakum) that could only be overcome with patience and obedience to the commands of the Prophet. He emphasizes that disobedience during balā' only worsens the situation.⁵³

Second, in the context of hidden trials, such as in QS. Al-Mā'idah: 94 which was revealed when the companions were tested by the appearance of game animals while they were in a state of ihram, KH. Shodiq emphasizes self-control and obedience to Allah's prohibitions, even when no one is watching. This attitude shows that calamities should be faced with integrity and the awareness that Allah is All-Seeing, not just relying on social supervision.⁵⁴

Third, KH. Shodiq emphasized that victory and ease can also be a trial, as mentioned in QS. Al-Anfāl: 17. In the event of the

⁵³ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 4, 2020, p.41-4

⁵⁴ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 7, 2020, p.10

Battle of Badr, victory is referred to as *balā' ḥasanan* (a good test). This means that blessings must be met with gratitude and humility, not with arrogance or negligence. According to him, trials in the form of victory are even more dangerous if approached without awareness.⁵⁵

A similar point is also explained by KH. Shodiq Hamzah in the interpretation of QS. Al-Fajr: 15–16, where he highlights the tendency of humans to judge honor and disgrace solely based on worldly conditions. He emphasized that when humans receive abundance in sustenance, they feel honored, and when their sustenance is restricted, they feel humiliated. *Tafsir al-Bayān* explains that this view is incorrect because both abundance and scarcity are forms of tests from Allah. Therefore, the correct attitude in facing both is gratitude when receiving blessings and patience when encountering difficulties. This attitude reflects a spiritual awareness that the world is not a measure of a person's worth in the eyes of Allah, but rather a means to test the quality of one's faith.⁵⁶

Fourth, when *balā'* comes in the form of a heavy religious command, such as the command to Prophet Ibrahim (QS. Al-Baqarah: 124), the way to respond to it is with unconditional obedience, even if the command is heavy logically or emotionally. KH. Shodiq emphasized that the high status of Prophet Ibrahim as a leader of the people arose from his attitude of perfecting obedience in facing trials.⁵⁷

Fifth, KH. Shodiq stated that this world itself is a place of trials, as explained in QS. Ali 'Imran: 186. Therefore, the most

⁵⁵ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 9, 2020, p.99

⁵⁶ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 30, 2020, p.145-147

⁵⁷ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 1, 2020, p.97-98

important way to live life is to realize that every aspect of life is a test, whether it be wealth, power, or health. The ideal attitude taught by Tafsir al-Bayān is: patience in adversity, gratitude in prosperity, obedience in commands, and seeking forgiveness in negligence.⁵⁸

Thus, Tafsir al-Bayān emphasizes that responding to calamities is not just about spontaneous reactions to disasters, but rather a process of spiritual education that requires heart training, self-control, and a deep awareness of divine wisdom.

⁵⁸ Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 4, 2020, p.68-69

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF KH. SHODIQ HAMZAH'S INTERPRETATION OF THE VERSES ABOUT *BALĀ'* IN *TAFSIR AL-BAYĀN*

A. Analysis of the Concept of Balā' in Tafsir Al-Bayān

Based on the study of verses containing the term *balā'* as presented in Chapter III and referring to the conceptual framework in Chapter II, it can be concluded that the concept of *balā'* in the Qur'an is an important component in depicting the relationship between humans and the will of Allah. Etymologically, *balā'* comes from the root word *balā-yablu*, which means to test or to manifest clearly. In the Qur'an, this term is used to mark the entire dynamics of life as part of a divine test, whether in the form of calamities or blessings.

The various forms of *balā'* in the interpretation of the Qur'an include tests in the form of physical challenges (such as war, disease, or poverty), social challenges (societal pressure, slander), and spiritual challenges (fear, doubt, or arrogance). In *Tafsir al-Bayān*, KH. Shodiq Hamzah emphasizes that *balā'* is not only in the form of physical suffering but can also come in the form of pleasure and victory. Therefore, *balā'* is understood as a process of *tarbiyah ilāhiyyah* (spiritual education) aimed at selecting, purifying, and strengthening a person's faith.

In response to calamities, KH. Shodiq Hamzah in *Tafsir al-Bayān* teaches that the attitudes that should be prioritized are *ṣabr* (patience), *ṭā'ah* (obedience), *shukr* (gratitude), and *ikhhlāṣ* (sincerity). When the trial comes in the form of difficulty, patience becomes the main protector. When the trial comes in the form of pleasure, gratitude must be the balance. In situations of temptation or heavy religious commands, absolute obedience and sincerity become the key. These attitudes show that facing trials is not just about enduring hardships,

but also transforming them into a means of spiritual growth and proof of faith.

The concept and attitude towards *balā'* can be further analyzed through the approaches of Sunni and Mu'tazilah theology. In Sunni theology, *balā'* is viewed as an absolute decree from Allah that is full of wisdom and must be faced with trust in God.¹ Meanwhile, from the Mu'tazilah perspective, *balā'* emphasizes the aspects of justice and human freedom, where trials occur as a consequence of human moral and rational responsibility in determining their stance.² Thus, Tafsir al-Bayān offers a balanced approach: acknowledging Allah's power in setting trials, while also encouraging humans to act actively and consciously in responding to them.

From that understanding, several main themes can be drawn that reflect how the concept of *balā'* is practiced and understood in various life situations as reflected in Tafsir al-Bayān. These themes not only show the textual form of *balā'* but also reveal the spiritual and moral approach offered by KH. Shodiq Hamzah in interpreting the related verses. Some themes that emerged from the analysis include:

1. *Balā'* as a Test of Faith and Obedience

Bala' in this context refers to a form of test that Allah presents through the commands or prohibitions of the Sharia, which may appear simple outwardly but, in reality, contain great spiritual depth. This is explicitly illustrated in QS. Al-Baqarah verse 249 and QS. Al-Mā'idah verse 94. In QS. Al-Baqarah verse 249, Allah tested Thalut's troops with a river: whoever drinks from

¹Muhammad Shodiq, Chicha Putro Rahman, dan Maudlotun Nisa, "Moderasi Teologi *Balā'* dalam Tafsir Al-Amtsal Nashir Makarim Shiraz: Respon Atas Fatalisme dan Eskapisme," *An-Nawa: Jurnal Studi Islam* 5, no. 2 (2023): p.154, doi: <https://scispace.com/pdf/moderasi-teologi-bala-dalam-tafsir-al-amtsal-nashir-makarim-oarmayl5pt.pdf>

² Muhyidin dan Nasihin, "Rasionalitas Teologi Mu'tazilah," *Ummul Qura: Jurnal Institut Pesantren Sunan Drajat (INSUD) Lamongan* 15, no. 2 (Oktober 2020): p.77–85, doi: <https://ejournal.unsuda.ac.id/index.php/UQ/article/view/382/364>

it is not part of Thalut's group, except for those who scoop it with their hands. Although it may seem like a small matter of merely refraining from drinking water when exhausted, in the interpretation of Al-Bayān, this test is a form of trial (balā') that concretely tests the purity of intention and obedience amidst harsh physical conditions. Only a small number passed this test, and they are the ones described as having true steadfastness of faith.³

Similarly, in QS. Al-Mā'idah verse 94, Muslims are tested with the arrival of game animals while they are in a state of ihram. This test seems simple because the animal is easily reachable, but Islamic law prohibits hunting while in the state of ihram. Tafsir Al-Bayān emphasizes that this is not merely a physical test but a test of faith regarding the unseen (bil-ghaib), which is whether a person remains obedient to Allah even when no one else sees their transgressions. Therefore, balā' in this form is essentially a test of submission to God's will that is not always related to suffering but rather obedience to seemingly trivial matters that have a significant spiritual impact.⁴

From these two verses, it is evident that balā' does not only manifest as severe suffering but also as hidden tests that examine a person's integrity, submission, and inner honesty in adhering to the sharia. The Tafsir Al-Bayān provides a local and practical dimension to this form of balā', emphasizing the importance of self-control, spiritual discipline, and the strengthening of spiritual awareness in responding to God's commands and prohibitions, especially in conditions that seem easy to violate. Therefore, this

³Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān Fii Ma'rifati Ma'ani Al-Qur'an*, cet.1, juz 2 (Semarang: Asnalitera, 2020), p.96-96

⁴Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 7, 2020, p.10

form of balā' becomes an important arena to prove a person's faith quality before God.

2. Bala' in the Form of Suffering and Hardship

Balā' here is the form of trial most commonly understood by society, namely in the form of disasters, difficulties, or pressures in life. This understanding is reinforced by several verses, such as QS. Al-Baqarah verse 155 and QS. Ali 'Imrān verses 152–154, which explicitly describe the difficult conditions that befall both individuals and groups of believers. In QS. Al-Baqarah verse 155, Allah states that humans will be tested with fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives, and fruits. This test targets five fundamental aspects of human life: security, basic needs, economy, life, and the fruits of labor. Tafsir Al-Bayān states that this verse illustrates the reality of a world full of trials and uncertainties. The suffering in this verse is not a punishment, but rather a means to hone patience and acknowledge that everything one possesses is a trust from Allah.⁵

In QS. Ali 'Imrān verses 152–154, the context of suffering is even sharper because it is related to the defeat of the Muslims in the Battle of Uhud. This defeat was not merely the result of military strategy but rather due to disobedience to the Prophet's command and worldly desires that overshadowed the spirit of the hereafter. In the interpretation of Al-Bayān, this defeat is understood as a trial that serves to reveal the true quality of faith.⁶ Even more so, verse 154 specifically mentions that Allah sent down drowsiness as a form of trust for some of the Muslims, while others were engulfed in bad thoughts about Allah. This shows that in suffering, humans are tested not only physically but also

⁵Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 2, 2020, p.12

⁶Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 4, 2020, p.41-42

spiritually: who can maintain their faith, and who slips into doubt and despair.

Furthermore, Tafsir Al-Bayān emphasizes that calamity in the form of suffering is part of the *tamḥīṣ* (purification of the soul) process, as mentioned in QS. Ali ‘Imrān verse 154: “...and to purify what is in your hearts.” This means that suffering is not merely a burden, but rather a divine mechanism to unveil the deepest layers of the human soul cleansing it from the diseases of the heart such as arrogance, ostentation, or delusion, and nurturing qualities of patience, trust in God, and humility.⁷

Therefore, based on the data from those verses and the theories of scholars such as ar-Rāghib and Imam ar-Rāzī, who state that *balā’* can be both bad and good, it can be concluded that suffering in life does not always have to be interpreted negatively.⁸ In the context of the Qur'an and the interpretation of Al-Bayān, suffering is positioned as a medium for character formation and spiritual maturity, as well as a reminder of the transience of worldly life. Awareness of this meaning makes calamity an important means to cultivate true submission to Allah and to place the world not as a goal, but as a place of trial that must be endured with full patience.

3. *Balā’* in the Form of Pleasure and Victory

Balā’ in the form of pleasure and victory that encompasses this test is often not realized by humans as a form of spiritual trial. In QS. Al-Anfāl verse 17 and QS. Al-Baqarah verse 49, Allah describes the victory of the Muslims in the Battle of Badr and the

⁷Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 4, 2020, p.44

⁸Muhammad Iqbal, *Konsep Bala Perspektif Al-Qur'an (Kajian Tematik dengan Pendekatan Semiotik Charles Sanders Peirce)* (Skripsi, Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, 2018), p.35.

salvation of the Children of Israel from the tyranny of Fir'aun as a form of great trial. Outwardly, this condition appears as a success and a blessing, but from a divine perspective, such enjoyment actually contains the potential for a great test. The Tafsir Al-Bayān emphasizes that the victory in the Battle of Badr was not merely about tactical superiority or physical strength, but rather a form of divine assistance that simultaneously tested the sincerity of the Muslims: whether they remained humble and grateful or fell into arrogance and believed they had won by their own power. In QS. Al-Anfāl verse 17, it is emphasized that it was not Prophet Muhammad who threw and killed the enemies, but it was Allah who did everything. This sentence emphasizes that victory is not solely the result of human effort but rather a test from Allah to measure submission and piety.⁹

Similarly, in QS. Al-Baqarah verse 49, the salvation of the Children of Israel from the oppression of Fir'aun and his army is referred to as a great calamity. Tafsir Al-Bayān places this moment of salvation as one of the ten great blessings of Allah to the Children of Israel.¹⁰ However, that blessing did not immediately make them more obedient. In fact, in many events thereafter, they slipped into deviation and arrogance, even asking Prophet Moses to make them a god other than Allah. This shows that pleasure and safety, although appearing as blessings, can become sources of negligence if not accompanied by high spiritual awareness.

In a theological perspective, as explained by Ar-Rāghib and Imam ar-Rāzī, *balā'* is not only in the form of calamities but can also be in the form of blessings. Blessings and victories are often more challenging tests because they can be sedative; people tend to

⁹Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 9, 2020, p.99

¹⁰Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 1, 2020, p.35-38.

feel secure and negligent when in abundance. Therefore, *balā'* in this form demands a high level of spiritual sensitivity: the ability to recognize every blessing as a trust, not merely as a possession. As explained in Ibn Aṭā's theory, the test of pleasure is more difficult to recognize because it comes in a pleasant form and does not directly cause suffering.

This nuanced understanding of trials in the form of pleasure is further deepened in KH. Shodiq Hamzah's interpretation of QS. Al-Fajr verses 15–16, which illustrate the psychological tendency of humans when facing two contrasting life conditions: abundance and hardship. Allah explains that when given ease and wealth, humans tend to say, "My Lord has honored me," and when faced with scarcity, they say, "My Lord has humiliated me." In Tafsir Al-Bayān, KH. Shodiq offers a distinctive interpretation by employing a local Javanese linguistic approach, translating the term *ibtilā'* as "*nyobo*" or "*nyicipi urip*," meaning "to test" or "to let one taste the flavors of life." According to him, when people receive blessings, they often perceive it as divine favor "*dijenengi mulya lan ditresnani*" (being called honored and loved) whereas when their sustenance is limited, they claim they have been disgraced "*dijenengi awon lan ditinggal*" (being called wretched and abandoned).¹¹

KH. Shodiq stresses that this kind of judgment is fundamentally flawed, because both abundance and limitation are equally forms of *balā'* a divine test. The proper response, he argues, is gratitude (*shukr*) in the face of blessings and patience (*ṣabr*) in hardship, reflecting the deeply held Javanese values of *nrimo* (acceptance) and *sabar* (patience). His interpretation reveals that

¹¹Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 30, 2020, p.145-147

calamity is not always present in the form of disasters or misfortune, but can also appear subtly in the form of ease, pleasure, and wealth which silently test the heart and spiritual consciousness of a person. Through this lens, Tafsir Al-Bayān goes beyond literal meaning and seeks to enrich the spiritual insight of the reader, encouraging them to develop a wise and reflective inner attitude, and to recognize the divine wisdom hidden behind all of life's conditions.

Thus, *balā'* in the form of blessings and victories is a hidden yet very heavy test of faith. It demands sincere gratitude, submission to God's will, and the awareness that every worldly pleasure is merely a measure of piety, not a sign of absolute nobility. The Tafsir Al-Bayān emphasizes that such tests must be approached with caution due to their subtle nature and potential to mislead if not accompanied by spiritual steadfastness.

4. *Balā'* in the Form of Subtle Temptations and Opportunities for Sin

Trial can appear in the form of subtle temptations that outwardly do not seem like a test but contain great potential to lead someone away from the values of piety. This is evident in QS. Al-A'rāf verse 163, which tells the story of the inhabitants of a coastal town, the Bani Israil who were tested by Allah through the prohibition of fishing on the Sabbath. In this context, the test does not come in the form of suffering or disaster, but rather as an enticing ease: the fish appear on the surface only on the Sabbath, the day when they are forbidden to work. Meanwhile, on ordinary days when they are allowed to work, the fish do not appear. This is a very subtle form of *balā'*, because Allah creates a situation that

seems "advantageous," yet contains a moral trap for those who are weak in piety.¹²

Tafsir Al-Bayān pays special attention to this aspect. The test is interpreted as a form of examination of the moral integrity and socio-religious obedience of the Children of Israel in facing a Sharia system that appears light but demands high self-control. In his interpretation, KH. Shodiq Hamzah emphasized that their transgressions were not merely due to hunger or urgent economic needs, but rather a desire to defy rules they deemed irrelevant. In fact, some of them sought a manipulative middle ground by creating artificial streams so that fish could technically be caught outside the Sabbath, even though they were still violating the substance of the law.

From a theoretical perspective, this form of balā' shows that tests do not always come in the form of painful misfortunes (musibah) but also in the form of tempting pleasures and opportunities that seem worldly advantageous. As explained by Abu Hilāl al-‘Askari, balā' sometimes takes the form of situations that push someone to choose between obedience and disobedience in ambiguous conditions.¹³ This shows that balā' also targets the inner and moral aspects of humans. When life choices are presented in a form that is not explicitly halal or haram, that is where the true test lies.

Thus, balā' in the form of subtle temptations is a test of the sharpness of the heart, the sensitivity of the conscience, and the consistency in upholding the principles of piety. In situations like this, there is no tangible physical suffering, but the greatest risk lies

¹²Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 9, 2020, p.56-59

¹³Abū Hilāl al-‘Askarī, *al-Furūq al-Lughawīyah*, 3rd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīdah, 1997), p.210.

in the deviation of values, hypocrisy, or justification of violations of religious law. Therefore, this type of calamity is very contextual with modern life, where many things appear legal according to the law but are not necessarily valid ethically and spiritually. The Tafsir Al-Bayān reinforces that facing temptations like this is more difficult because the main enemy is not external calamities but rather the desires and internal rationalizations of humans themselves.

5. **Balā' as Tamḥīṣ (Purification of the Heart)**

Balā' can also mean tamḥīṣ, which is the process of purifying the soul and cleansing the heart from all forms of inner diseases such as doubt, bad intentions, or weakness of faith. This meaning is explicitly explained in QS. Āli 'Imrān verse 154, where Allah sends down sleep as a form of tranquility to some of the Muslims, while others are engulfed in anxiety and suspicion towards Allah's will. This verse shows that after external trials such as defeat on the battlefield, humans also experience internal trials that are much more subtle yet profound, namely spiritual conflicts that reveal the honesty of the heart.¹⁴

In Tafsir Al-Bayān, balā' in this verse is associated with a divine mechanism aimed at *li-yabtaliya mā fī ṣudūrikum wa li-yumaḥḥiṣa mā fī qulūbikum*, which means to test the contents of the chest and purify the contents of the heart. Thus, balā' does not only manifest as suffering or a command of the Sharia, but rather as an intensive spiritual process to shape a strong character, aware of the essence of life, and worthy of receiving mercy and assistance from Allah SWT. Tafsir Al-Bayān emphasizes that this purification is a form of hidden mercy that can only be felt by those who

¹⁴Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 4, 2020, p.44

possess patience and high sensitivity of faith. Thus, these six verses were selected as representations of various forms of *balā'* that will be analyzed further in the next subchapter. The selection of these verses aims to illustrate the diversity of forms of *balā'*, whether in the form of misfortune, blessings, defeat, victory, or moral tests, as understood in the interpretation of KH. Shodiq Hamzah.

From the five categories of meaning, it can be concluded that *balā'* is a divine means to evaluate, educate, and shape human character to be closer to Allah SWT. *Balā'* is God's way of testing a person's sincerity, patience, and steadfastness in facing the dynamics of life. The Tafsir Al-Bayān consistently shows that every form of *balā'* has a profound social and historical context and is always intended to strengthen monotheism, enhance patience, and cultivate awareness of spiritual and social responsibilities of the community.

Next, regarding who receives trials, the Qur'an explains that trials are part of the divine law that applies to all humans without exception. QS. Al-Mulk verse 2 and QS. Al-Baqarah verse 155 emphasize that tests in life are part of the very creation of humans. This means that trials are universal and not limited to Muslims or certain groups. However, several verses, such as QS. Ali 'Imrān verse 186 and QS. Al-Māidah verse 94, specifically mention that the believers also receive *balā'* as a form of strengthening their faith. Tafsir Al-Bayān in this context emphasizes that the trials for the believers are not punishments, but rather a means of solidifying their spiritual position and preparing them to receive greater blessings.

Likewise, previous communities such as the Children of Israel also experienced *balā'* as mentioned in QS. Al-Baqarah verse 49 and QS. Al-A'rāf verse 141. This shows that *balā'* is a spiritual and historical phenomenon that transcends time and communities.

Thus, *balā'* in the Qur'an is not limited to mere calamities but is an integral divine mechanism for shaping spiritual awareness, legal obedience, and human moral responsibility before their Lord. The Tafsir Al-Bayān typically reinforces the aspects of locality and the depth of ethical values in every trial mentioned.

From this analysis, *balā'* can be conceptually defined as "a test or trial set by Allah for humans in various forms, whether in the form of pleasure or suffering, aimed at filtering, purifying, and strengthening the quality of a person's faith and piety."

B. The Relevance of the Concept of Bala' in the Context of Contemporary Life

The advancement of science, technology, and globalization has brought humanity into an era of speed, instantaneity, and convenience. Various modern innovations have made daily life activities easier, ranging from digital communication and work automation to wide-open access to global information. However, these advancements also bring new challenges in the aspects of human spirituality and morality.¹⁵

In this context, the concept of *balā'* becomes very relevant because modern life not only provides pleasures but also holds the potential for complex trials. The ease of accessing technology and information can become a hidden form of *balā'*, as emphasized in the previously explained forms of *balā'*: tests in the form of pleasures, subtle temptations, and violations of religious law.

Tafsir Al-Bayān teaches that trials are not always in the form of physical suffering but can also appear in subtle and tempting forms, such as an abundance of wealth, power, or opportunities for violations

¹⁵Ricka Handayani *et al.*, "Navigasi Spiritual di Era Digital: Analisis Konten Cyberreligion dalam Media Sosial," *Tadbir: Jurnal Manajemen Dakwah* 6, no. 2 (Desember 2024): p.177–192. Doi: <https://jurnal.uinsyahada.ac.id/index.php/Tadbir/article/view/14300/6102>.

that seem lawful in the eyes of the law but are contrary to ethics and spirituality. In modern life, this is evident in a consumerist lifestyle, a digital existence full of image-making, and a shift in spiritual values towards materialism. Forms of relevance of the concept of *balā'* that can be applied in contemporary life include.

1. Relevance in Character Education

In everyday life practice, the concept of *balā'* can be integrated into various environments as part of character education. In the school environment, teachers can make *balā'* a theme for value education through case studies or simulations. For example, students are given the responsibility to maintain classroom cleanliness without direct supervision. When they continue to carry out this task honestly and consistently, it reflects a form of *balā'* that tests personal integrity and honesty.

In family life, parents can also teach that limitations in facilities, disappointment due to unfulfilled desires, or failure in competitions are not the end of everything, but rather part of *balā'* that must be endured to cultivate patience, a spirit of learning, and the ability to self-evaluate. Meanwhile, in the workplace, an employee facing target pressure, team conflicts, or other professional challenges can interpret these as forms of *balā'* that demand moral responsibility, discipline, and loyalty to work ethics principles.¹⁶

In addition, in the realm of formal education, *balā'* can be incorporated into the curriculum through religious or character education in the form of thematic modules such as "Maintaining Integrity Amid Temptations" or "Learning from the Trials of the

¹⁶Janes Sinaga, Ramlen Woran, and Juita Lusiana Sinambela, "Pendidikan Karakter dalam Era Milenial: Menjawab Tantangan Global dan Lokal," *Coramundo: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 3, no.2 (2021): p.94–100. Doi: <https://jurnal.sttarastamarngabang.ac.id/index.php/Coramundo/article/view/184/160>.

Prophet and Companions." These modules can be linked to the story in QS, Ali Imran verses 152–154 about the Battle of Uhud, which teaches the importance of consistency, patience, and commitment in challenging and adverse conditions.¹⁷ In these ways, the understanding of *balā'* does not stop at the conceptual realm but becomes a concrete foundation in character building and spiritual resilience in various sectors of life.

2. Relevance in the World of Work and Professionalism

In the modern work world influenced by advancements in science and technology and globalization, *balā'* can be interpreted as a test of integrity and professional responsibility. The demands for efficiency and widespread access to technology often create opportunities for abuse, such as data manipulation, digital corruption, or plagiarism. For example, an employee who can access the financial system without supervision is tested to see whether they remain trustworthy or instead abuse their authority.¹⁸

Tafsir Al-Bayān emphasizes that *balā'* can manifest as seemingly light temptations that test moral steadfastness. Therefore, in the context of the workplace, the value of *balā'* can be internalized through a culture of honest work, digital ethics, and spiritual guidance that strengthens professionalism amidst the challenges of the times.

3. Relevance in Consumption and Lifestyle

In the era of global capitalism marked by high consumption rates and easy access to various products, the temptation of consumerism becomes one form of *balā'* in the guise of very subtle

¹⁷Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 4, 2020, p.41-44

¹⁸Rifa Ridzani Maulida *et al.*, "Integritas di Era Digital: Menjaga Nilai di Tengah Perubahan," *Jurnal Hukum dan Kewarganegaraan* 13, no. 1 (2025): p.14-19. Doi: <https://ejournal.cahayailmubangsa.institute/index.php/causa/article/download/2540/2202/7317>.

yet testing pleasures. The concept of *balā'* as a test of pleasure as explained in QS. Al-Anfāl verse 17 and QS. Al-Baqarah verse 49 reminds humans not to be consumed by a lavish and excessive lifestyle.

In the era of global capitalism marked by high consumption rates and easy access to various products, the temptation of consumerism becomes one form of *balā'* in the guise of very subtle yet testing pleasures. The concept of *balā'* as a test of pleasure as explained in QS. Al-Anfāl verse 17 and QS. Al-Baqarah verse 49 reminds humans not to be consumed by a lavish and excessive lifestyle.

This is further emphasized in QS. Al-Fajr verses 15–16, which illustrate how humans tend to equate wealth with honor and poverty with disgrace. KH. Shodiq Hamzah in *Tafsir Al-Bayān* interprets this as a psychological and spiritual misjudgment, where both conditions abundance and limitation are in fact tests from Allah. This interpretation offers a reflective critique of modern tendencies to view material success as a sign of divine favor, while overlooking the spiritual trials that come with prosperity.¹⁹

Tafsir Al-Bayān highlights that material abundance and ease of life can become hidden tests that actually distance a person from gratitude and spiritual awareness. Therefore, in daily life, the concept of *balā'* is relevant in fostering a simple lifestyle, choosing wise consumption, and making blessings and benefits the main benchmarks, rather than mere luxury and prestige. In the context of globalization, this attitude is important for shaping individuals who are not only consumers but also reflective and socially responsible.

4. Relevance in Information Media

¹⁹Shodiq Hamzah Utsman, *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Juz 30, 2020, p.145-147

Amid the flood of abundant information in the current digital era, *balā'* can be interpreted as a test of selective ability in receiving and disseminating information. In this context, the test does not manifest in the form of physical suffering but rather in the mental and moral challenge of distinguishing between true and misleading information, including hoaxes, slander, and content that undermines moral values.²⁰

Tafsir Al-Bayān emphasizes the importance of caution in addressing social realities, including the flow of information, as part of the spiritual responsibility of a believer. The practical application is evident in social media habits, where individuals are urged not to easily trust or share information without verification. By making *balā'* an awareness of the moral tests behind technology, society is expected to build a culture of healthy, wise, and ethical digital literacy, in accordance with Islamic values that prioritize truth, caution, and social responsibility.

5. Relevance in Facing a Crisis

In the modern era, many events such as global pandemics, natural disasters, social conflicts, or mental health disturbances can be understood as forms of *balā'* or tests from Allah. These trials not only have physical impacts but also test a person's mental resilience and faith. In this context, *balā'* teaches humans to be patient, to have faith, and not to easily give up.²¹

Tafsir Al-Bayān emphasizes that life's trials are a way for Allah to strengthen the soul and bring humans closer to Him. In

²⁰Ayu Jelita Ningrum dan Moh. Anas Kholis, "Modernisasi Kehidupan Spiritual (Studi Literatur terhadap Agama Digital di Ruang Digital)," *Partisipatoris: Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah dan Komunikasi* 5, no. 2 (Desember 2023): p.44–49. Doi: <https://ejournal.umm.ac.id/index.php/jurnalpartisipatoris/article/view/35150/14838>.

²¹Haeriyah dan Ahmad Mujahid, "Tawakkal dan Implikasi Spiritual dalam Menyikapi Pandemi COVID-19 (Pendekatan Linguistik)," *Nady Al-Adab: Jurnal Bahasa Arab* 19 (Juni 2022): p.52–63. Doi: <https://journal.unhas.ac.id/index.php/naa/article/view/21122/8353>.

daily life, this can be seen when someone remains calm and strives to be positive despite experiencing heavy pressure or when the community helps each other during a disaster. Thus, tribulation becomes a means to shape a person who is mentally and spiritually resilient amidst the various challenges of the times.

6. Relevance in Social and Environmental

Justice Economic instability, food crises, and the degradation of humanitarian values (such as the normalization of violence and hate speech, human exploitation, discrimination, and intolerance, etc.) can be understood as forms of collective calamity that broadly affect societal life. From the perspective of the Qur'an and the interpretation of Al-Bayān, this condition reflects a test given by Allah to assess the extent to which humans can manage social trust fairly and responsibly.

Balā' in this form shows that trials are not only individual but also structural, demanding collective involvement in building a more just and civilized civilization. Efforts to cultivate a culture of empathy, strengthen social institutions, and promote ethics in policy-making become tangible responses to that collective trial.

The positive impact of contextualizing balā' is the formation of a spiritually resilient character. The understanding that trials are part of the process of self-purification can encourage someone to be more patient, trusting in God, and introspective. In addition, balā' also fosters a critical attitude towards blessings, encourages gratitude, and shields oneself from arrogance and pride due to worldly achievements.

However, the negative impact of not understanding the concept of balā' in the modern context is the emergence of a fatalistic attitude or, conversely, the feeling of not needing God. Some people might view suffering as a curse or injustice, then lose their will to live and fall into depression. On the other hand, there are those who consider success as

the absolute result of human effort and then forget the spiritual and divine aspects.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

A. Conclusion

This chapter presents the main findings of the study and outlines the concluding reflections based on the analysis that has been carried out. It summarizes how KH. Shodiq Hamzah interprets the concept of *balā'* in *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, and how that interpretation remains relevant to the realities of modern life. The following conclusions are drawn:

1. In *Tafsir Al-Bayān fī Ma'rifati Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān*, KH. Shodiq Hamzah interprets *balā'* not merely as physical suffering or disaster, but as part of *tarbiyah ilāhiyyah* (divine education) aimed at shaping moral integrity and spiritual awareness. In his interpretation, *balā'* is classified into two major forms: *balā'* in the form of goodness and hardship (*balā' ḥasan and balā' syarr*), and *balā'* in the form of divine commands and prohibitions (*al-amr wa al-nahy al-syar'ī*). Each category reflects a different aspect of divine testing, intended not only to challenge human endurance but also to cultivate gratitude, patience, obedience, and spiritual closeness to God. By using the Javanese language and cultural context, KH. Shodiq Hamzah makes the message of *balā'* more relatable and accessible to the Indonesian Muslim community, especially the Javanese.
2. In contemporary life, the concept of *balā'* is highly relevant because various aspects of modern times hold the potential to be forms of tests from Allah, both in the form of difficulties and pleasures. Technological advancement and digitalization, for example, can be a hidden form of *balā'*, where easy access to information and social media often leads humans into arrogance, self-image, and neglect in worship. Wealth and the pleasures of life

are also forms of *balā' ḥasan* that demand gratitude, self-control, and social responsibility. Popularity and social influence, especially in the digital media era, become a test in maintaining morals, trustworthiness, and the impact of behavior on others. Additionally, moral crises such as the normalization of corruption, hate speech, and intolerant behavior are forms of collective calamity that demand a shared awareness to return to the values of justice, empathy, and integrity. Equally important, various forms of life difficulties such as poverty, mental health issues, and natural disasters remain *balā' syarr* that test the steadfastness of faith, patience, and social solidarity. By understanding these various phenomena through the perspective of *balā'* as interpreted by KH. Shodiq Hamzah in *Tafsir Al-Bayān*, Muslims are encouraged to make every life experience both blessings and calamities a means of self-improvement, spiritual strengthening, and drawing closer to Allah SWT in facing the ever-evolving challenges of the times.

B. Suggestions

Based on the results of the research that has been conducted, there are several aspects that can be considered for further research.

1. This research is still limited to the interpretation of the concept of *balā'* in one tafsir book, namely *Tafsir Al-Bayān fī Ma'rifati Ma'ānī al-Qur'ān* by KH. Shodiq Hamzah. Therefore, further research could expand the study by comparing the interpretation of *balā'* between *Tafsir Al-Bayān* and other tafsir books, both classical like *Tafsir al-Ṭabarī* and contemporary like *Tafsir al-Miṣbāḥ*, in order to obtain a more diverse and comprehensive perspective on the dynamics of the meaning of *balā'* across different times and approaches.
2. This research places greater emphasis on the analysis of the meaning and relevance of *balā'* from a spiritual and moral perspective. For future research, it is recommended to examine the

social or psychological implications of the concept of *balā'* in community life, particularly in the context of responses to disasters, mental stress, and social crises. This is important to see how far the concept of *balā'* can be integrated into strengthening the spiritual resilience and character of the community amidst the challenges of the times.

3. Considering that *Tafsir Al-Bayān* is composed in the Javanese language and has a strong local nuance, further research can conduct an in-depth study on the localization of the interpretation of *balā'* from the perspective of Nusantara exegesis, both in terms of language, culture, and the social values raised. This is important to emphasize the contribution of local exegesis in enriching the thematic exegesis treasury in Indonesia.

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