

Raḥmān and Raḥīm in the Qur'an and the Bible: An Intertextual Reading through Julia Kristeva's Theory

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Abstract

This study examines the intertextuality of the concepts of God's compassion and mercy through the terms al-Raḥmān and al-Raḥīm in the Qur'an and raḥūm in the Bible. This study is qualitative in nature, taking the form of a literature review that employs Julia Kristeva's approach to intertextuality combined with historical analysis. Primary data include Q.S Al-Fatihah/1:1 and 3, Q.S An-Nisa/4:1, Q.S Hud/11:90, and Q.S Al-Zumar/39:53 from the Qur'an, as well as Exodus 34:6, Deuteronomy 4:31, Psalm 78:38, and Isaiah 49:15 from the Bible. Secondary data consists of exegetical works, Arabic and Hebrew lexicons, biblical commentaries, and literature on the theory of intertextuality. Data were collected through documentation, inventory, contextual classification, and the selection of representative verses, then analyzed descriptively and analytically by identifying conceptual similarities, transformations of meaning, and intertextual dialogue. The results of this study indicate that the relationship between raḥūm and al-Raḥmān and al-Raḥīm extends beyond their shared root, r-ḥ-m, as well as meanings such as compassion, mercy, forgiveness, and the nurturing of God's relationship with humanity. However, through a process of intertextuality, the Qur'an does not merely repeat the concept of raḥūm but transforms, expands, and modifies its meaning in accordance with its own theological framework. Thus, intertextuality signifies a dialogue with earlier traditions without undermining the Qur'an's framework of meaning.

Keyword: *Raḥmān-Raḥīm, Intertextuality, Al-Qur'an dan Bibel*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji intertekstualitas konsep belas kasih dan rahmat Allah melalui istilah al-Raḥmān dan al-Raḥīm dalam Al-Qur'an serta raḥūm dalam Alkitab. Penelitian ini adalah kualitatif dalam bentuk penelitian pustaka yang menggunakan pendekatan intertekstualitas Julia Kristeva dikombinasikan

dengan analisis historis. Data primer meliputi Q.S. Al-Fatihah/1:1 dan 3, An-Nisa/4:1, Hud/11:90, dan Al-Zumar/39:53 dari Al-Qur'an, serta Keluaran 34:6, Ulangan 4:31, Mazmur 78:38, dan Yesaya 49:15 dari Alkitab. Data sekunder berupa kitab tafsir, leksikon bahasa Arab dan Ibrani, komentar Alkitab, serta literatur mengenai teori intertekstualitas. Data dikumpulkan melalui teknik dokumentasi, inventarisasi, klasifikasi kontekstual, dan pemilihan ayat representatif, kemudian dianalisis secara deskriptif-analitis dengan mengidentifikasi kesamaan konseptual, transformasi makna, dan dialog antarteks. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa hubungan antara raḥûm dengan al-Raḥmān dan al-Raḥīm melampaui akar kata yang sama, yaitu r-ḥ-m, serta makna-makna seperti belas kasih, rahmat, pengampunan, dan pemeliharaan hubungan Allah dengan umat manusia. Namun, melalui proses intertekstual, Al-Qur'an tidak sekadar mengulang konsep raḥûm, melainkan melakukan transformasi, ekspansi, dan modifikasi makna sesuai dengan kerangka teologinya sendiri. Dengan demikian, intertekstualitas menandakan adanya dialog dengan tradisi-tradisi sebelumnya tanpa merusak kerangka makna Al-Qur'an.

Kata Kunci: *Raḥmān-Raḥīm*, Intertekstualitas, Al-Qur'an dan Alkitab

A. Introduction

In the major religions, God is understood not only as Sovereign and, judge but also as the All-Merciful One who relates to humanity through love, forgiveness, and compassion. The themes of justice, grace, and moral responsibility have served as a shared foundation from ancient Near Eastern civilizations to the pillars of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic ethics, in which all three Abrahamic traditions place divine compassion at the heart of the relationship between God and humanity.¹ From a soteriological perspective, God's grace bridges divine glory and human efforts to attain salvation; thus, a comparative and intertextual study of the concept of divine mercy holds profound theological and social significance for interfaith relations in the contemporary era.²

Islam is a universal religion that promotes high ideals based on compassion and humanity. These fundamental values are profoundly embodied in two of Allah's divine names: *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm*. Beyond featuring prominently in the opening invocation (*basmalah*) of nearly every

¹ Mohamad Abdullah Alsaied and Mariam Almansori, 'The Common Humanity in Ancient World Religions: An Analytical Study in Building Bridges of Understanding between Civilizations a Case Study of Western Asia', *Journal of Posthumanism* 5, no. 2 (April 2025). hlm. 237, <https://doi.org/10.63332/joph.v5i2.421>.

² Moh. Nor Ichwan, Sayed Majid Nabavi, and Mohamed Cherif Benaouali, 'The Concept of Salvation in the Qur'an: A Theological Analysis and Comparative Study with Other Abrahamic Traditions', *International Journal of Religious and Interdisciplinary Studies (IJoRIS)* 2, no. 1 (March 2025): hlm. 15, <https://doi.org/10.64529/q7rm8405>.

surah in the Qur'an, these two attributes constitute the foundation of Islamic teachings, which emphasize love, benevolence, and justice. Conceptually, *al-Raḥmān* reflects the divine manifestation of boundless compassion toward all creation, whereas *al-Raḥīm* signifies a more specific and enduring form of mercy extended to those who believe and remain faithful.³ Historically, the Bible and the Qur'an belong to the same Abrahamic tradition, sharing a common theological collective memory. Julia Kristeva views a text as the result of the absorption and transformation of other texts.⁴

This study focuses on the intertextual relationship between the terms *raḥmān* and *raḥīm* in the Qur'an and *raḥûm* in the Bible, all of which share a common etymological root referring to the image of the female womb as a symbol of protection, tenderness, and unconditional love. Through the integration of ideological theory and oral studies, this research reveals how the Qur'anic *al-Raḥmān/al-Raḥīm* should not be understood as a direct transformation of an exclusively divine Hebrew attribute but as a distinctive Qur'anic reconfiguration of the broader Semitic semantic field of *r-ḥ-m*, whose Hebrew forms encompass human, relational, and divine dimensions of compassion.

There have been several relevant studies. *First*, research on the three monotheistic religions shows that religious symbols are highly sacred as representations of God because they are derived directly from the sacred texts.⁵ *Second*, a study analyzing a comparison of the principle of divine justice which serves as a fundamental belief for Muslims and Christians.⁶ *Third*, research comparing conceptions of God based on an examination of textual evidence.⁷ All three studies focus on aspects of the symbolism of divinity, justice, or conceptions of divinity. However, none have yet explored the intertextuality of God's attribute of mercy namely, *raḥmān* and *raḥīm* in the Qur'an and *raḥûm* in the Bible, as textual manifestations of a shared theological

³ Sidqu Azmie Halilintar Al Azkaa, 'Interpretasi Al-Rahman Dan Al-Rahim Dalam Al-Qur'an Serta Relevansinya Terhadap Moderasi Beragama Di Indonesia' (UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim, 2025), hlm. 26.

⁴ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, European Perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), hlm. 36.

⁵ An-Najmi Fikri Ramadhan et al., 'Personifikasi dan Simbolisasi Tuhan dalam Kitab Suci Agama- Agama', *Jurnal Religi : Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 19, no. 02 (2023).

⁶ Annisa Raudhatul Afra and Ach Faidi Rasyadi, 'Konsep Keadilan Tuhan Pada Hari Penghakiman Perspektif Alkitab Dan Al-Qur'an (Pendekatan Intertekstualitas Julia Kristeva)', *Al – Ghaaziy : Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* 2, no. 1 (2026). Hlm. 90.

⁷ Esti Oktavya et al., 'Analisis Perbandingan Konsepsi Ketuhanan Dalam Al-Qur'an Dan Bible', *Gunung Djati Conference Series* 14 (2022): hlm. 1713, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0006-2952\(75\)90011-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0006-2952(75)90011-8).

heritage. It is this gap that constitutes the novelty and primary focus of this study.

This study aims to fill a gap in the literature by analyzing the intertextuality between *raḥmān* and *raḥīm* in the Qur'an and *raḥûm* in the Bible. This study does not aim to downplay the doctrinal differences between Islam and Christianity but rather to identify the theological connections that link them within the broader framework of the Abrahamic tradition. By integrating Julia Kristeva's framework, this study is expected to contribute to the development of sacred text intertextuality studies while opening space for a more constructive theological dialogue between Islam and Christianity amid the challenges of global pluralism.

B. Research Methods

This study uses qualitative research based on library sources, focusing on sacred texts that include the terms *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm* in the Qur'an and *raḥûm* in the Bible. It draws on secondary data from classical exegetical works, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghaib*, and *Tafsir Al-Mishbah*, as well as Bible commentaries, Hebrew and Arabic linguistic lexicons, and relevant theoretical literature on intertextuality.

Data collection began with a lexical mapping of the two corpora, identifying 95 occurrences of *al-Raḥīm* and 57 of *al-Raḥmān* in the Qur'an and 13 occurrences of *raḥûm* in the Bible. From this corpus, eight verses (four from each scripture) were purposively selected based on four criteria: (1) lexical occurrence, prioritizing theologically significant grammatical forms; (2) semantic density, selecting verses with layered meanings beyond formulaic usage; (3) theological relevance, ensuring representation of key themes of divine mercy in both scriptures; and (4) intertextual relevance, retaining verses that could be analyzed through the four adapted categories from Laurent Jenny's framework: parallelism, transformation, expansion, and modification.

The analysis then applies Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality to uncover conceptual similarities and semantic shifts between the two sets of verses, using Jenny's four transposition categories as the operational framework for comparison.

C. Discussion dan Research Results

Intertextuality according to Julia Kristeva

Julia Kristeva asserts that a text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations, meaning that it is the result of the assimilation and transformation of other texts.⁸ The concept of intertextuality replaces the concept of intersubjectivity,

⁸ Kristeva, *Desire in Language*, hlm. 66.

and poetic language is understood to possess meanings that are present within the text itself as well as meanings that refer to other texts outside of it.⁹

Julia Kristeva's intertextuality can be summarized into nine transpositions; *Transformation*, the translation or adaptation of elements into another text. *Modification*, the imitation and alteration of the hypogram.¹⁰ *Expansion*, the extension of the hypogram. *Haplology*, the reduction of certain elements from the hypogram. *Parallelism*, the similarity between the quoted text and the hypogram. *Conversion*, the reversal of the hypogram's meaning. *Demythification*, radical opposition to the hypogram. *Existence*, the introduction of different elements. *Defamiliarization*, the renewal of the hypogram in meaning or textual form.¹¹ Among these nine transpositions, this study focuses on four categories: parallelism, transformation, expansion, and modification, as they best reflect the relationship between *al-Raḥmān/al-Raḥīm* and *raḥûm*. The remaining five categories were not evident in the data.

The Concept of *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm* in the Qur'an

Al-Raḥmān and *al-Raḥīm* are derived from the same trilateral root ر-ح-م (*ra-ḥa-mīm*). Ibn Fāris, explains that this root carries a single core meaning: tenderness (*riqqah*), gentleness, and compassion (*raḥmah*).¹² Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī adds a further layer to this root meaning, noting that *raḥīm* (womb) is etymologically and conceptually the feminine form of the same root, so that the term also evolved to denote kinship and familial bonds, since all human beings originate from a single *raḥīm*.¹³ In terms of frequency, *al-Raḥīm* occurs 95 times in the Qur'an, while *al-Raḥmān* occurs 57 times.¹⁴ Unlike *al-Raḥīm*, *al-Raḥmān* functions almost as a proper name of Allah and can stand in direct substitution for the name "Allah," as in Q.S. Al-Isrā'/17:110 "Call upon Allah or call upon *al-Raḥmān*; whichever you call, to Him belong the best names".

Morphologically, the two names differ in *wazn*, which classical exegetes use to distinguish their meanings. *Al-Raḥmān* follows *fa'lān*, denoting fullness and intensity, while *al-Raḥīm* follows *fa'īl*, indicating constancy and

⁹ Al Musanna College of Technology, Sultanate of Oman and Edilberto C. Cruz, 'Memories and Mindscapes: An Intertextual Study of Haruki Murakami's Norwegian Wood', *IAFOR Journal of Arts & Humanities* 6, no. 1 (June 2019): hlm. 76, <https://doi.org/10.22492/ijah.6.1.07>.

¹⁰ Laurent Jenny, 'The Strategy of Form', in *French Literary Theory Today A Reader*, First published (Cambridge University Press, 1982), hlm. 50.

¹¹ Laurent Jenny, *The...* hlm. 60.

¹² Abû Husain Ahmad bin Fâris Zakariyyâ Al-Qazwînî, *Mu'jam Maqâyîs Al-Lughah* (Beirut: Dâr al-Fikr al-Ilmiyyah, 2011), vol 2, hlm. 498.

¹³ Abû al-Qâsim Râghib bin Ali Al-Ashfahânî, *Mufradât Fî Ghârib Al-Qur'ân* (Beirut: Dar Al-Ma'rifah, t.t), hlm. 191.

¹⁴ Muḥammad Fu'âd' Abd Al-Bâqî, *Mu'jam Al-Mufahrash Li Al-Fâzh Al-Qur'ân Al-Karîm* (Dar Al-Ma'rifah, 2015), hlm. 553.

continuity.¹⁵ Because *fa'lān* signifies totality, *al-Raḥmān* has no plural form and is exclusively used for Allah. In contrast, *al-Raḥīm* can be pluralized (*ruḥamā*) and applied to humans, as in the Qur'anic description of the Prophet (*ra'ūf al-raḥīm*, Q.S. At-Tawbah/9:128). Thus, *al-Raḥīm* refers to Allah's continuous and contextual mercy toward believers. Beyond the general mapping, four verses require deeper exegesis because each highlights a unique theological role of *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm*.

First, as an act of self-naming. The Basmalah that opens the Qur'an, repeated in Q.S. Al-Fatihah/1:1 and 1:3, functions not as a description but as the revelation's own opening declaration.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ... الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ

Meaning: *In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Most Gracious, Most Merciful.*

Al-Ṭabarī interprets *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm* as two dimensions of God's mercy that encompass both this world and the hereafter.¹⁶ Ibn Kathīr distinguishes between *al-Raḥmān*, God's universal mercy and *al-Raḥīm*, His mercy specifically for the believers.¹⁷ M. Quraish Shihab views the Basmalah as an affirmation that every human action should begin with the remembrance of Allah, the Most Merciful.¹⁸

Second, as a root shared with kinship itself (Q.S. An-Nisa'/4:1)

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ

Meaning: *And be mindful of Allah in Whose Name you appeal to one another and 'honour' family ties*

The word *al-arḥām* is the plural of *raḥim*, the root shared with *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm*, referring to the womb and, by extension, blood kinship. Al-Ṭabarī interprets it as a command to preserve kinship, reflecting the womb as the shared origin of humanity.¹⁹ Ibn Kathīr notes that early Arabs invoked Allah alongside the bond of the womb, demonstrating the *raḥim*'s strong association with social and emotional obligation.²⁰ Al-Rāzī argues that pairing

¹⁵ Maulana Muhammad Ali, *The Religion of Islam: A Comprehensive Discussion of the Sources, Principles and Practices of Islam* (Lahore, India: The Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam, 1936), hlm. 159.

¹⁶ Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Jarir Ath-Thabari, *Tafsir Ath-Thabari* (Pustaka Azzam, 2007), Jilid 1: hlm. 212.

¹⁷ Abu Al-Fida' Isma'il bin 'Umar bin Katsir Al-Qurasyi Al-Dimasyqi, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-'Azhim* (Ar-Riyadh - As-Sa'udiyyah: Dar Thiybah lin-Nasyr wat-Tawzi, 1999), Jilid 1, hlm. 116.

¹⁸ M. Quraish Shihab Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah: "Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Lentera Hati, 2002), Jilid 1, hlm. 23.

¹⁹ Abu Al-Fida' Isma'il bin 'Umar bin Katsir Al-Qurasyi Al-Dimasyqi, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an Al-'Azhim*, Jilid 6, hlm. 344.

²⁰ Abu Al-Fida' Isma'il bin 'Umar bin Katsir Al-Qurasyi Al-Dimasyqi, Jilid 2, hlm. 206.

Allah's name with *al-arḥām* in an oath emphasizes the importance of kinship.²¹ Quraish Shihab further sees the womb as a reflection of *Ar-Raḥmān*'s mercy, reminding humanity that compassion is inherent in creation.²²

Third, as the ground of covenantal endurance (Q.S. Hud/11:90)

ثُمَّ تَوَبُّوا إِلَيْهِ إِنَّ رَبِّي رَحِيمٌ وَدُودٌ

Meaning: *and turn unto Him (in repentance): For my Lord is indeed full of mercy and loving-kindness.*

Al-Ṭabarī defines *raḥīm* as active compassion, in which Allah not only forgives but also loves (*wadūd*) His repentant servants.²³ Ibn Kathīr highlights the pairing *Raḥīmun Wadūd*, showing how Shu'ayb emphasizes Allah's loving mercy while warning his people of past destruction.²⁴ Al-Rāzī views Allah's mercy and love as the basis for accepting repentance, not as an obligation.²⁵ Shihab emphasizes that prophetic preaching combines warning with compassion in calling people to repentance.²⁶

Fourth, as forgiveness enacted through survival (Q.S. Al-Zumar/39:53)

لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِنْ رَحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

Meaning: *Do not lose hope in Allah's mercy, for Allah certainly forgives all sins. He is indeed the All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.*

Al-Ṭabarī interprets *Ghafūr* as a manifestation of Allah's mercy (*Raḥīm*) for those who repent, keeping the door to forgiveness open.²⁷ Ibn Kathīr regards the verse as a strong expression of *rajā'* (hope), revealed to reassure those concerned about their past sins.²⁸ Al-Rāzī distinguishes the two attributes: *al-Ghafūr* removes the threat of punishment, while *al-Raḥīm* bestows mercy and reward.²⁹ Shihab highlights the address "My servants" (*'ibādī*) as emphasizing Allah's intimate relationship with His servants.³⁰

Overall, the commentators agree that *al-Raḥmān* denotes Allah's comprehensive mercy, while *al-Raḥīm* denotes specific and continuous mercy. Their approaches differ: Al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr emphasize historical-linguistic aspects, Al-Rāzī focuses on the theological function of mercy, and

²¹ Fakhr al-Din al-Razi al-Razi, *Mafātīḥ Al-Ghaib: Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 3 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāṣ al-'Arabī, 1420), Jilid 9, hlm. 476.

²² Shihab, *Tafsīr Al-Mishbah: "Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an*, Jilid 2: hlm. 231.

²³ Ath-Thabari, *Tafsīr Ath-Thabari*, Jilid 14, hlm. 273.

²⁴ Abu Al-Fida' Isma'il bin 'Umar bin Katsir Al-Qurasyi Al-Dimasyqi, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'an Al-'Azhim*, Jilid 4, hlm. 346.

²⁵ al-Razi, *Mafātīḥ Al-Ghaib: Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, hlm. 390.

²⁶ Shihab, *Tafsīr Al-Mishbah: "Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an*, Jilid 7.

²⁷ Ath-Thabari, *Tafsīr Ath-Thabari*, Jilid 22, hlm. 408.

²⁸ Abu Al-Fida' Isma'il bin 'Umar bin Katsir Al-Qurasyi Al-Dimasyqi, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'an Al-'Azhim* (Ar-Riyadh - As-Sa'udiyyah: Dar Thiybah lin-Nasyr wat-Tawzi, 1999), Jilid 7, hlm. 106.

²⁹ al-Razi, *Mafātīḥ Al-Ghaib: Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, Jilid 27, hlm. 463.

³⁰ Shihab, *Tafsīr Al-Mishbah: "Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian Al-Qur'an*, Jilid 7.

Shihab highlights its contextual and thematic dimensions across this world and the hereafter.

The Concept of *Raḥûm* in the Bible

The concept of רַחוּם (*raḥûm*; compassionate, merciful) in the Bible is derived from the Hebrew root רָחַם (r-ḥ-m), which forms a semantic family with רָחַם (*rāḥam*; to have compassion, to show mercy), רַחֲמִים (*raḥămîm*; compassion, mercy), and רֶחֶם (*reḥem*; womb, uterus).³¹ According to Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, this root conveys compassion born of a close and caring relationship, thus referring not merely to pity but to active efforts to protect, sustain, and restore the vulnerable. The semantic connection between *reḥem* (womb) and *rāḥam* (to have compassion) demonstrates that compassion in the Hebrew tradition is understood through the image of a mother's love that safeguards the life of her child within her womb.³²

In the context of Old Testament theology, compassion and mercy are intertwined concepts. Compassion reflects God's inner character, while mercy is the outward expression of that character, manifested through forgiveness, patience, and the restoration of His people. The adjective form רַחוּם is predominantly used to describe the nature of God, indicating that compassion is an integral aspect of divine identity rather than a fleeting reaction to human suffering.³³ Moreover, God's compassion is intricately linked to the concept of בְּרִית (*berit*), or covenant.

In the covenantal relationship between God and Israel, *raḥûm* serves as a theological basis for God's continued support of His people despite their repeated transgressions of the covenant. God's mercy does not undermine His justice; instead, it precedes judgment, providing a pathway for repentance and restoration. This makes *raḥûm* a central theme in explaining the ongoing relationship between God and His chosen people.³⁴ The theological implications of *raḥûm* are evident throughout various biblical texts. In Exodus 34:6, *raḥûm* is central to God's self-revelation and character. This concept continues in Deuteronomy 4:31 as a sign of God's covenant faithfulness, in Psalms as a source of hope, and in Isaiah 49:15 through the metaphor of a

³¹ 'רחם \textbar Abarim Publications Theological Dictionary (Old Testament Hebrew)', in *Abarim Publications*, n.d., accessed 6 August 2026, <https://www.abarim-publications.com/Dictionary/r/r-ht-mfin.html>.

³² R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1981), hlm. 841.

³³ 'Strong's Hebrew: 7349. רַחוּם (Rachum) -- Compassionate, Merciful', accessed 18 June 2026, <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/7349.htm>.

³⁴ 'Strong's Hebrew: 1285. בְּרִית (Berith) – Covenant, Treaty, League', n.d., accessed 6 August 2026, <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/1285.htm>.

mother's love. Thus, the root רַחַם (*r-ḥ-m*) represents a fundamental theological concept of God's mercy in the Bible. Here are Four verses illustrate the various meanings of *raḥûm* in the Bible.

First, in Exodus 34:6, describes the character of God as loving and faithful toward His people. In Hebrew, the verse reads, "YHWH YHWH 'ēl *raḥûm wəḥannûn, 'erek 'appayim wərav-ḥesed we'emet*," which is translated in the Terjemahan Baru (TB) as, "TUHAN, TUHAN, Allah penyayang dan pengasih, panjang sabar, berlimpah kasih-Nya dan setia-Nya." Meanwhile, the New King James Version (NKJV) translates it as, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth."³⁵

Exodus 34:6 is a divine self-revelation that forms the foundation of the theology of mercy in the Old Testament. In this verse, רַחֻם (*raḥûm*) appears as a masculine singular adjective derived from the root רַחַם (*r-ḥ-m*) and is used to describe God's character as the "compassionate God." *Raḥûm* denotes compassion manifested through the acts of sustaining, forgiving, and restoring His people.³⁶ The New Translation renders it as "compassionate," while the NKJV uses the term "penyayang," yet both affirm that compassion is a fundamental attribute of God that serves as the foundation for His patience, faithfulness, and covenantal relationship with Israel.³⁷

Second, in Deuteronomy 4:31 describes God as a merciful and faithful God who remains committed to His covenant with His people. In Hebrew, the verse reads, "Kî 'ēl *raḥûm YHWH 'ēlōheykā lō' yarpākā wālō' yašḥîtekā wālō' yiškah 'et-barîṭ 'āḥōtēkā*," which is translated in the Terjemahan Baru (TB) as, "Sebab TUHAN, Allahmu, adalah Allah penyayang; Ia tidak akan membiarkan engkau dan tidak akan memusnahkan engkau, juga Ia tidak akan melupakan perjanjian yang diikat-Nya dengan nenek moyangmu dengan sumpah." Meanwhile, the New King James Version (NKJV) translates it as, "For the LORD your God is a merciful God; He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them."³⁸

In Deuteronomy 4:31, רַחֻם (*raḥûm*) reappears as a masculine singular adjective that affirms God's character as the "merciful God." Unlike Exodus 34:6, which presents *raḥûm* as God's self-revelation, this verse positions mercy as the guarantee of the covenant's (בְּרִית, *berîṭ*) continuity. In the context of

³⁵ 'Exodus 34:6 - The Tablets Are Replaced', in *Bible Hub*, n.d., accessed 6 August 2026, <https://biblehub.com/exodus/34-6.htm>.

³⁶ Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*.

³⁷ 'Exodus 34 Berean Study Bible', n.d., accessed 7 August 2026, <https://biblehub.com/study/exodus/34.htm>.

³⁸ 'Deuteronomy 4:31 - Warning Against Idolatry', in *Bible Hub*, n.d., accessed 6 August 2026, <https://biblehub.com/deuteronomy/4-31.htm>.

Moses' warning regarding the consequences of Israel's disobedience, *raḥûm* makes clear that punishment does not negate God's faithfulness to His covenant. Both the TB and the NKJV *raḥûm* not merely emotional compassion, but a covenantal mercy that enables forgiveness, repentance, and restoration.³⁹

Third, Psalm 78:38 describes God as compassionate and forgiving toward His people. In Hebrew, the verse reads, "*Wəhû' raḥûm yaḱappēr 'āwōn wəlō' yašḥîṭ,*" which is translated in the Terjemahan Baru (TB) as, "*Tetapi Ia bersifat penyayang, Ia mengampuni kesalahan mereka dan tidak memusnahkan mereka.*" Meanwhile, the New King James Version (NKJV) translates it as, "*But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them.*"⁴⁰

Psalm 78:38 places רַחוּם (*raḥûm*) within a liturgical context that recalls the history of Israel's unfaithfulness. The form רַחוּם (*raḥûm*) functions as a masculine singular adjective, but here God's compassion is expressed through concrete actions: "forgiving" (*yaḱappēr*; forgave) and "not destroying" His people. The TB translates it as "penyayang," while the NKJV opts for the phrase "being full of compassion," which emphasizes the abundance of God's mercy. Both translations show that *raḥûm* grounds God's forgiveness and sustains His covenant relationship with Israel despite their rebellion.⁴¹

Fourth, Isaiah 49:15 portrays God's compassion through the powerful image of a mother's love for her child. In Hebrew, the verse reads, "*Hatiškah 'iššāh 'ulāh mēraḥēm ben-biṭnāh,*" which is translated in the Terjemahan Baru (TB) as, "*Dapatkah seorang perempuan melupakan bayinya, sehingga ia tidak menyayangi anak dari kandungannya?*" Meanwhile, the New King James Version (NKJV) translates it as, "*Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb?*"⁴²

Although it does not use the adjective form רַחוּם (*raḥûm*), Isaiah 49:15 uses the participle form מְרַחֵם (*mēraḥēm*; having compassion; showing love), which is derived from the root word רָחַם (r-ḥ-m). This verse expands the theological meaning of the root through the metaphor of a mother toward a child in the רֶחֶם (*reḥem*; womb). The TB translates it as "menyayangi," while the NKJV uses the phrase "have compassion," both of which emphasize that

³⁹ 'רחם \textbar Abarim Publications Theological Dictionary (Old Testament Hebrew)'.

⁴⁰ 'Psalm 78:38 And yet He Was Compassionate; He Forgave Their Iniquity and Did Not Destroy Them. He Often Restrained His Anger and Did Not Unleash His Full Wrath.', n.d., accessed 6 August 2026, <https://biblehub.com/psalms/78-38.htm>.

⁴¹ 'Psalm 78 Berean Study Bible', n.d., accessed 7 August 2026, <https://biblehub.com/study/psalms/78.htm>.

⁴² 'Isaiah 49:15 - You Are My Servant', in *Bible Hub*, n.d., accessed 6 August 2026, <https://biblehub.com/isaiah/49-15.htm>.

God's compassion surpasses even a mother's love for her child. Thus, Isaiah builds upon the tradition begun in Exodus 34:6 by portraying God's compassion as a love that sustains, protects, and never abandons His people, even when they face exile and suffering.⁴³

Understanding *raḥûm* in the Bible requires looking at its socio-historical context. The concept emerged while Israel lived in the polytheistic Ancient Near East.⁴⁴ God's revelation to Moses at Sinai, prioritizing *raḥûm*, was a revolutionary theological statement: Yahweh is not a terrifying deity but a God whose mercy precedes all else.⁴⁵ Despite Israel's frequent cycle of idolatry and exile, this divine compassion was continually invoked by prophets and psalmists to urge repentance.⁴⁶

Analysis of Intertextuality Between the Bible and the Qur'an

1. Conceptual Similarities

First, God's love and compassion. The Bible and the Qur'an share similarities in their use of the Semitic root *r-h-m* to describe God's compassion, mercy, and grace. In Hebrew, words such as *raḥûm*, *raḥamîm*, and *reḥem* are related to the womb and life. In Arabic, terms like *al-Raḥmān*, *al-Raḥîm*, and *al-Arḥām* also relate to compassion and kinship. Second, Forgiveness. The next similarity lies in the close connection between God's mercy and forgiveness. In the Bible, God's attribute of *raḥûm* is associated with the act of forgiving mistakes and sins. In the Qur'an, the attributes *raḥîm* and *raḥmān* are also related to forgiveness and the call for humanity to repent and return to God. Thus, God's mercy is not merely understood as an attribute but is manifested through forgiveness extended to sinful humanity. Third, the maintenance of God's relationship with humanity. In the Bible, the attribute of *raḥûm* signifies God's ongoing relationship with His people, even when humans commit transgressions. In the Qur'an, the attributes of *raḥmān* and *raḥîm* also indicate that God's mercy opens the way for humans to return to Him after committing sins. Both traditions regard God's mercy as the foundation for the preservation of the relationship between God and humankind.

2. Transformation of Meaning

In line with Laurent Jenny's view that intertextuality is a process of assimilation and transformation, The concept through four main categories:

⁴³ 'Isaiah 49 Berean Study Bible', n.d., accessed 7 August 2026, <https://biblehub.com/study/isaiah/49.htm>.

⁴⁴ Rinto Francius Sirait, *Pengantar Perjanjian Lama Kejadian-Maleakhi*, Cetakan Pertama (Jawa Tengah: CV. Alinea Edumedia, 2025), hlm. iii-iv.

⁴⁵ Karen Armstrong, *A History of God: The 4000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (New York: A.A Knopf, 1993), hlm. 28-38.

⁴⁶ Sirait, *Pengantar Perjanjian Lama Kejadian-Maleakhi*, hlm. iv.

First, paralel. The parallels between the concept of mercy in the Bible and the Qur'an. Both use the same linguistic root, namely *r-ḥ-m*, which means "womb" and forms the basis of the concept of God's mercy. In the Bible, *raḥûm* is an important part of God's self-revelation, as in Exodus 34:6. In the Qur'an, *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm* open Q.S Al-Fatihah/1:1, 3. Both also link mercy to the metaphor of the womb and kinship, as written in Isaiah 49:15 and Q.S Al-Nisa'/4:1. Second, transformation. There is a transformation of the concept of compassion in the Qur'an. In the Bible, *raḥûm* is closely associated with God's faithfulness to His covenant with Israel, even when the people sinned, as written in Deuteronomy 4:31 and Psalm 78:38. However, in the Qur'an, this concept is transformed into a more universal divine compassion that is present in human life through the terms *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm*.

Third, expansion. The Qur'an broadens the scope of the concept of mercy, which in the Bible is often associated with forgiveness and the withholding of God's wrath. Through *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm*, God's mercy encompasses all of creation while specifically reaching out to believers. This expansion is also evident in the affirmation that God forgives all human sins, as written in Q.S Al-Zumar/ 39:53. Fourth, modification. The Qur'an reinterprets the concept of *raḥûm* by emphasizing the relationship between mercy, love, and repentance. While in the Bible *raḥûm* is often associated with patience and forgiveness, the Qur'an links it to *wadūd* or active love, as stated in Q.S Hud/11: 90. Furthermore, the concept of *rahim* in Isaiah 49:15 is transformed into the basis for the obligation to maintain kinship ties in Q.S Al-Nisa/4: 1.

3. Dialogue Between Texts

The relationship between the Bible and the Qur'an regarding divine mercy is best understood as a dynamic intertextual dialogue rather than mere copying.⁴⁷ Grounded in the shared Semitic root, both scriptures utilize this common linguistic foundation to explore God's grace. However, while the biblical *raḥûm* primarily functions as an attribute anchoring forgiveness within a specific covenantal framework, the Qur'an actively repositions and reinterprets this concept. By employing *al-Raḥmān* and *al-Raḥīm*, the Islamic text transforms the original semantic field into a comprehensive system of divine identity, demonstrating how earlier elements are assimilated and restructured to fit a distinct theological logic.

Consequently, this active engagement reveals a simultaneous process of continuity and change, where the Qur'an refracts preceding religious motifs

⁴⁷ Jenny, hlm. 43.

through its own unique orientation.⁴⁸ These findings carry significant implications for comparative scriptural studies: they prove that conceptual similarities signify complex interactions rather than simple textual borrowing. By elevating.

D. Conclusion

This study concludes that the relationship between *raḥûm* and *al-Raḥmān-al-Raḥīm* is understood as an intertextual relationship characterized by continuity and transformation, rather than merely lexical similarity. Although all three terms share the same Semitic root, *r-ḥ-m*, as well as similar meanings such as mercy, love, forgiveness, and womb, the Qur'an rearticulates this semantic field within its own theological framework through parallelism, expansion, modification, and transformation. While *raḥûm* in the Bible primarily describes God's mercy and His faithfulness in the covenant, *al-raḥmān* and *al-raḥīm* have evolved into a broader network of divine names and attributes, encompassing universal grace, forgiveness, repentance, familial bonds, and the relationship between God and humanity. Thus, this intertextual relationship reveals continuity in linguistic and conceptual foundations while also demonstrating transformations in function, scope, and theological meaning.

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