

## **MUHAMMAD ASAD'S INTERPRETATION OF ABRAHAM'S MIRACLE IN THE QUR'AN: A CRITICAL ANALYTICAL STUDY**

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### **Abstract**

The interpretation of the Qur'an has undergone various approaches throughout history, one of which is the rational approach aimed at bridging religious understanding with modern thought. Muhammad Asad, a contemporary mufassir, attempted to interpret the Qur'an in a more rational manner so that it could be accepted by Western societies, which rely on logic in understanding religious concepts. This article focuses on Muhammad Asad's interpretation in *The Message of the Qur'an* regarding the miracle of Prophet Ibrahim, in which he interprets the supernatural allegorically or symbolically, emphasizing the moral aspect. This article examines Asad's approach using a descriptive-analytical method, comparing it with classical tafsir, and assessing the implications of his rational methodology. This article examines the criticisms of Muhammad Asad's exegesis and compares it with mainstream tafsir sources. It argues that the exegesis under review is able to withstand the criticisms it has received and remains worthy of being considered one of the best in its field.

**Keywords:** *Allegoris; Ibrahim Prophet; Muhammad Asad, Miracle*

## Introduction

Reason (‘aql) is the distinctive faculty that differentiates humans from animals. Through reason, humans are able to understand their environment, assume responsibility, and fulfill their purpose in life. In Islam, reason is recognized as a valuable tool, yet it is bound by limits to prevent it from being mixed with imagination or illusion, which could lead to misguidance. When used properly, reason guides individuals toward righteous deeds such as *tawḥīd* (monotheism), and helps them think effectively in pursuit of happiness in both this world and the hereafter.

The urgency of this study lies in the importance of presenting a Qur’anic interpretation that bridges the classical Islamic tradition with the challenges of rational modern thought. In today’s global context—marked by growing dialogue between the Islamic world and the West—rational approaches such as that of Muhammad Asad are particularly relevant for introducing Islamic teachings in a way that is more accessible to non-Muslim audiences, especially those who prioritize logical reason (Aripin & Nugroho, 2023; Hermanto et al., 2020). By examining Asad’s interpretation of the miracle of Prophet Abraham in *The Message of the Qur’an*, this study not only explores the moral dimensions of prophetic stories, but also highlights how symbolic exegesis can serve as a constructive alternative to traditional textual approaches. This analysis is important in assessing the extent to which a rational methodology can uphold the legitimacy of sound Qur’anic interpretation while opening space for more effective intercivilizational dialogue.

Several Muslim scholars have utilized reason and rationalism in interpreting the Qur’an and in explaining its meanings. They also attempt to resolve complex issues by offering logical explanations. In this regard, reason plays a crucial role in clarifying certain concepts such as miracles. However, since miracles are, by nature, extraordinary events that transcend the laws of nature, reason alone cannot fully explain them. Nevertheless, some scholars have interpreted miracles

using rational approaches. One such figure is Muhammad Asad, who interpreted the miracles of the prophets through reason (Bakri et al., 2023). However, many other scholars argue that his approach is flawed, as it rejects the supernatural aspect of miracles. These scholars tend to favor more rational explanations, even when such interpretations contradict the original meanings conveyed in the Qur'an.

In interpreting the miracles of the prophets, including those of Prophet Abraham, Muhammad Asad adopts a distinctive rational-modernist approach, as reflected in his seminal work *The Message of the Qur'an*. Asad views miracles not merely as supernatural events that defy the laws of nature, but rather as spiritual and ethical symbols meant to guide human reason toward divine truth. He rejects literal interpretations of miracles when they appear to contradict the principles of rationality and the moral coherence of the Qur'an, emphasizing instead that the moral message and deeper meaning of miraculous events are more significant than their physical dimensions. This approach is rooted in the tradition of Mu'tazilite thought and early 20th-century Islamic modernism, which sought to reconcile faith with reason. Therefore, a critical study of Asad's exegesis is necessary to evaluate the extent to which his symbolic interpretations remain faithful to the context of the verses and the Qur'anic worldview, particularly in Surah *As-Saffāt* [37]:99–111, which contains the narratives of Abraham's miracles (Asad, 1980). This article aims to analyze Muhammad Asad's exegetical approach to the story of Prophet Abraham, with a focus on the allegorical method he employs in his tafsir.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Biography of Muhammad Asad**

Muhammad Asad, born Leopold Weiss on July 2, 1900, in Lviv (now part of Ukraine), came from a Jewish family with a strong religious tradition (Reid, 1997). His father, Akiva Weiss, was a lawyer descended from an orthodox rabbinic lineage, while his mother came

from a wealthy banking family. From an early age, Asad received strict Jewish religious education, studying the Torah, the Talmud, and various commentaries. In addition, he mastered several languages and developed a deep interest in literature and philosophy, reading the works of Nietzsche, Rilke, and Sienkiewicz (Asad, 1954, p. 59).

His intellectual life in early 20th-century Vienna reflected a dynamic engagement with the spirit of European humanism and rationalism, similar to the intellectual experience of Albert Camus in France (Cherniss, 2025). Both emerged in the postwar context of Western civilizational crisis and actively participated in intellectual discourses that shaped their critical responses to modernity. While Camus embraced humanistic existentialism in confronting the absurdity of life, Asad turned to the spiritual depth of Islam in search of meaning. Asad's participation in Vienna's intellectual cafés reflects a space of free dialectics that later laid the foundation for his critique of the West in *The Road to Mecca*, just as Camus used theatre and literature to challenge the value vacuum of modern society. This divergence illustrates how shared intellectual contexts can yield vastly different philosophical responses (Asad, 1954).

Asad's experience as a correspondent in the Middle East in 1922 marks a transformative phase in his intellectual journey, mirroring that of Edward Said (Hasan, 2024), particularly in critiquing colonialism and Orientalism. Like Said, who later wrote *Orientalism* to expose Western epistemological bias against the East, Asad developed a critical stance against modern colonial projects such as Zionism, which he saw as contrary to universal moral values. His rejection of Zionism and support for Arab resistance reflected a commitment to justice and humanitarian solidarity across identity lines—an attitude resonating with postcolonial thought. His association with anti-Zionist Jewish figures such as Jacob Israel de Haan further solidified his position as an independent thinker who rejected the simplification of ethnic and religious identities and advocated for intercultural dialogue grounded in ethics and empathy (Asad, 1954).

His travels across the Muslim world, especially in Saudi Arabia, deepened his understanding of Islam. He met King Abdulaziz ibn Saud and served as one of his advisers, participating in diplomatic and modernization initiatives within the kingdom. He became increasingly convinced that Islam provided a balance between spirituality and practical life—contrasting sharply with the materialism he observed in Western civilization.

In 1926, after years of reflection and study, he formally embraced Islam in Berlin and adopted the name Muhammad Asad. This decision marked a profound transformation in his life. He moved to Saudi Arabia and continued to be involved in intellectual and social projects. Asad also played a role in the Pakistani independence movement, contributing to the country's formation and helping formulate the foundations of Islamic political thought (Asad, 1954).

As a prominent Muslim intellectual, Asad authored several influential works, including *The Road to Mecca* (1954), an autobiographical account of his spiritual journey, and *The Message of the Qur'an* (Asad, 1980), an interpretive translation of the Qur'an that has received widespread recognition. His book *The Principles of State and Government in Islam* (1961) provides a comprehensive discussion of Islamic political theory.

After spending several decades in Morocco, Asad spent his later years in Spain. He passed away on February 20, 1992, in Mijas, Spain, and was buried in the Muslim cemetery in Granada. In recognition of his contribution to fostering understanding between the Islamic and Western worlds, a plaza in front of the United Nations headquarters in Vienna was named Muhammad Asad Platz in 2008.

### **The Concept of Miracle (Mu'jizah)**

The term *mu'jizah* derives from the Arabic root “عجز” (*‘ajaza*), meaning “inability” or “incapacity,” and its plural is *mu'jizāt* (Abd al-Ghani, 2013, p. 2783). Linguistically, *‘ajza* denotes the opposite of firmness (*ḥazm*), indicating an inability to perform an act. The verb *‘ajiza* is used to describe failure in handling a matter. According to Ibn

al-‘Arabi, one who is incapable of doing something is called ‘*ajūz* (عَجْزٌ) or ‘*ajūz* (عَجْزٌ) (Mandzur & Al-Misri, n.d.).

A miracle is defined as an extraordinary event that occurs at the hands of someone claiming prophethood, serving as evidence of the truth of that claim. Miracles cannot be imitated by ordinary humans. In philosophy and mysticism, miracles refer to astonishing events that defy natural explanation, hence phrases such as “miracle of knowledge” or “miracle of religion.” In general terms, a miracle is a rare event beyond human capacity. Although the Arabic term *mu‘jizah* can refer to any extraordinary occurrence, earlier scholars like Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal preferred the term *āyah* (signs of God’s greatness). Later scholars, however, distinguished between *mu‘jizāt* (specific to prophets) and *karāmāt* (granted to saints). Despite this distinction, both are supernatural events that surpass natural laws.

According to Manna‘ al-Qattān, the term *mu‘jizah* comes from *i‘jāz* (إِعْجَازٌ), meaning “to prove the inability.” Terminologically, ‘*ajz* (العجز) means incapacity and is the opposite of *qudrab* (ability). When something is proven to be inimitable, it demonstrates that the performer possesses extraordinary power. In this context, *i‘jāz* refers to the inability of the Arabs to produce a text that rivals the Qur’an, thereby affirming the Prophet’s divine mission. This inimitability extends beyond the Prophet’s contemporaries to all future generations (Al-Qattan, 2000).

Technically, a miracle is an extraordinary event that surpasses natural laws, coincides with a prophetic claim, and presents a challenge (*taḥaddī*) that no one can replicate or approximate (Al-Harrani & Al-Halim, 1386).

A miracle must be linked to a prophetic claim and serve as proof of a prophet’s truthfulness. Many scholars maintain that the validity of a prophet must be supported by miracles. Certain theological groups, such as the Mu‘tazilah, argue that only prophets are granted miracles and reject claims of supernatural occurrences attributed to

magicians, sorcerers, or even saints' *karāmāt*. This view is held by most Mu'tazilites and several other scholars.

### **Miracles According to Muhammad Asad**

Muhammad Asad's understanding of mu'jizāt (miracles) differs from the conventional theological definition that characterizes miracles as supernatural and sensory events. Asad translated several Qur'anic verses related to miracles and interpreted them not merely as occurrences outside the laws of nature observable by all, but rather as "signs" and "messages." Thus, what is referred to as a miracle is, in his view, actually an extraordinary message. However, he asserts that such extraordinary messages should not be categorized as supernatural, because natural law is a comprehensible manifestation of sunnatullah (the divine laws of creation). Within this framework, Asad considers all events—whether seemingly in accordance with or contrary to ordinary occurrences—as part of the natural order (Sarikaya, 2024).

Asad's view that all Qur'anic statements are addressed to human reason and must be understood both literally and symbolically (As'ad Humu, n.d.), as emphasized in his commentary on Surah Āli 'Imrān verse 7—reflects a close affinity with Ibn Rushd's (Averroes) philosophical approach to interpreting revelation (Rusyd, n.d.). Ibn Rushd also emphasized that mutashābihāt (ambiguous verses) must be interpreted rationally to align with the principles of reason and philosophy, especially for the ulū al-albāb (people of insight). Both figures rejected rigid literalism and advocated metaphorical or symbolic interpretation to access the deeper, inner meaning of the Qur'an—particularly in engaging with cultural diversity and intellectual reasoning. This parallel indicates that rational Qur'anic interpretation is not merely a modern phenomenon but has deep roots in classical Islamic thought.

Asad bases his view of miracles on the verse: "The miracles are only with Allah" (Qur'an, 10:20). In his commentary on this verse, he states:

*“In the Qur’an, extraordinary messages come through prophets chosen by God and endowed with special capacities, hence referred to as ‘bearers of miracles.’ However, the verse ‘The miracles are only with Allah’ makes clear that prophets are neither the originators nor producers of miracles.” (Asad, 1980).*

Asad’s hermeneutical approach, which emphasizes demythologization of Qur’anic narratives—such as the miracles of Prophet Ibrahim—resembles Rudolf Bultmann’s method of interpreting the Gospels. Bultmann, a German Christian theologian, also proposed the demythologization of New Testament texts, believing that mythological elements should be interpreted existentially and symbolically so that their moral and spiritual messages remain relevant for modern humanity. Like Asad, Bultmann did not deny the truth of revelation but sought to shift its interpretation away from literalism towards meanings that address ethical and existential dimensions. Therefore, both Asad and Bultmann contributed to efforts to reconcile religious understanding with modern reason, without sacrificing the spiritual substance of sacred texts (Ogden, 1984, p. 41).

This approach is evident in Asad’s interpretation of Surah Al-Isrā’ (17:101), in which he translates the phrase “nine miracles” as “nine messages.” Additionally, he consistently translates the Qur’anic word āyah as “sign and message,” rather than as extraordinary occurrences.

After outlining Asad’s general approach to the concept of miracles, we now turn to an analysis of verses concerning the miracles of Prophet Ibrahim.

## **The Miracle of Prophet Ibrahim**

### **Reviving the Birds**

Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him) was one of the great prophets who was granted many miracles by God to guide humanity. One such miracle occurred when he desired to understand how God brings the dead back to life. God instructed him to take four birds, slaughter them, and mix their flesh together. Then, Ibrahim was to



place portions of the birds' meat and bones on four separate hills. When he called them, the birds returned to life by God's permission and flew toward him. This miracle served as evidence of God's power to resurrect the dead, as will happen on the Day of Judgment. This story is found in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 260.

### **Rejection of a Literal Reading in The Message of the Qur'an**

Muhammad Asad did not interpret this miracle literally but understood it as a symbolic act conveying a moral and spiritual lesson. According to him, when God instructed Ibrahim to take four types of birds, the intention was for Ibrahim to learn how to make the birds obey his call through training. Asad interprets the phrase *fa-ṣurhunna* to mean “teach them to respond to your call” or “make them incline toward you.”

Asad's symbolic interpretation of *fa-ṣurhunna* as a form of spiritual training and moral approach reflects the method of Fazlur Rahman, a modernist Islamic thinker who also emphasized the importance of interpreting the Qur'an in terms of moral meaning and ethical objectives. Like Asad, Fazlur Rahman rejected rigid textualism and advocated for a contextual reading that considers social dynamics and human spiritual development. Both saw the Qur'an as offering not just literal guidance but profound moral instruction, which must be understood through historical and hermeneutical approaches. Hence, Asad's interpretation of this verse not only broadens the linguistic horizon of meaning but also underscores the necessity of interaction between text, context, and the ethical aims of revelation—as also developed by Fazlur Rahman through his double movement theory (Rahman, 1982).

Asad supported the opinion of Abū Muslim, as recorded by al-Rāzī (Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, 1986), that the lesson from this story is that if a human being can train birds to come when called, then certainly God—Whose will governs all creation—can bring about life simply through the command “*Kun fayakūn*” (“Be, and it is”). This affirms that God's ability to create life far surpasses any human capacity.

Muhammad Asad's interpretation of the story of Prophet Ibrahim, which emphasizes God's absolute power in creating and reviving life without being confined to physical or biological aspects of miracles, aligns with the views of Sayyid Ahmad Khan, an Islamic reformer from India. Sayyid Ahmad Khan also rejected a literal reading of miracles and emphasized the rational and symbolic dimensions of Qur'anic stories (Muszandra, 2021). He believed that the Qur'an's primary purpose is to instill awareness of God's power, wisdom, and justice—not to present a record of supernatural events. Both Asad and Sayyid Ahmad Khan sought to provide interpretations comprehensible to modern rational minds while preserving the deep theological meaning. In this way, both represent the modern interpretative trend that aims to safeguard the sacredness of revelation while articulating it in a rational and spiritually contextual framework.

Therefore, Muhammad Asad avoids a literal approach in interpreting this story and instead offers a more symbolic and philosophical perspective. For Asad, the deeper message of this verse is the realization that God's power is unlimited and that with a single command, life can be created or ended.

### **Critique of *The Message of the Qur'an***

#### **Opposition from Classical Commentators**

In his exegesis, Imam al-Rāzī himself states, "The exegetes unanimously agree that the meaning of the verse is that the birds were dismembered, and that Abraham cut up their limbs, flesh, feathers, and blood, then mixed them all together" (Razi & Ibnu Umar, 1421). Al-Rāzī further outlines several arguments challenging Abu Muslim's interpretation:

1. The exegetes prior to Abu Muslim unanimously agreed that the birds were slaughtered and dismembered; rejecting this view would be tantamount to rejecting *ijmā'* (scholarly consensus).

2. Abu Muslim's interpretation is not uniquely applicable to Abraham and thus does not grant him any particular distinction among the prophets.
3. Abraham asked God to show him how the dead are resurrected, and the surface meaning of the verse implies that this request was granted. However, in Abu Muslim's interpretation, the request is not actually fulfilled.
4. The phrase "*then place on each hill a part of them*" (Q. 2:260) clearly indicates that the birds were physically cut into parts. Abu Muslim responds by interpreting "part" as referring to one of the four birds, but al-Rāzī considers this interpretation weak, arguing that "part" clearly refers to dismembered pieces of each bird, thus implying the phrase means "place on each hill portions from each of the birds."

#### Critique of *The Message of the Qur'an* Based on Apparent Meaning

One of the standard principles in Qur'anic interpretation is adhering to the apparent meaning (*ẓāhir*) of the words, meaning that verses should be interpreted as written, without deviation or distortion. A failure to do so risks misrepresenting the Qur'an's message.

Muhammad Asad's rational approach in *The Message of the Qur'an*, influenced by his teacher Muḥammad 'Abduh and following the line of thought of Abū Muslim al-Iṣṣfahānī, represents a continuation of the intellectual exegetical tradition that is also found in the thought of Nasr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd. Abū Zayd argued that the Qur'an should be treated as a cultural text, requiring historical and rational analysis to uncover its universal message. Like Asad and 'Abduh, Abū Zayd critiqued literalist readings that tend to fossilize the dynamic meaning of revelation. They all agreed that miracles (*mu'jizāt*) should not necessarily be read as supernatural phenomena, but rather as moral and spiritual symbols. However, this approach has often faced resistance from conservative scholars who see it as a reduction of divine miracles. Nevertheless, Asad and Abū Zayd

remained firm in their conviction that rational interpretation actually enhances the Qur'an's relevance in modern life without diminishing its theological substance.

The majority of classical scholars understand Q. al-Baqarah 2:260 as referring to a physical miracle performed by Abraham, one that serves as concrete proof of God's power to resurrect the dead—a response to doubts about the resurrection.

This traditionalist approach, exemplified in the tafsīr of al-Ṭabarī (Al-Thabari, n.d.), affirms a literal understanding of the event, asserting that the birds were truly cut up and brought back to life by God's will. For al-Ṭabarī and others, this miraculous event reinforces belief in the resurrection and divine omnipotence. In contrast, symbolic interpretations such as those by Muhammad Asad and Abū Muslim al-Iṣfahānī view the episode as allegorical, conveying spiritual lessons rather than documenting a literal supernatural event. This contrast reflects a broader hermeneutical tension within Qur'anic exegesis—between safeguarding the textual purity of revelation and rearticulating its message in light of contemporary rationality. Nevertheless, Muḥammad 'Abduh rejected the majority's literalist position and favored Abū Muslim's interpretation. He approached the verse from a rational-scientific perspective, denying the event's supernatural character. This reading has been criticized for allegedly diverging from the apparent meaning of the verse and potentially distorting the Qur'an's intended message.

### **Saved from the Fire**

This narrative appears three times in the Qur'an in implicit form: in Sūrat al-Anbiyā' (21:52–68), al-'Ankabūt (29:24–25), and al-Ṣāffāt (37:83–97). All three passages depict Abraham's debate with his father or his people over idolatry. In each version, Abraham is eventually cast into the fire by his people (Q. 21:68; 29:24; 37:97).

### **Rejection of Literalism in *The Message of the Qur'an***

According to Asad, verses such as Q. 29:24 and 37:97 suggest a deeper symbolic interpretation of Abraham's trial, where the "fire" refers not to physical flames but to the metaphorical fire of persecution and severe hardship that Abraham endured in his lifelong opposition to idolatry (Asad, 1980). He states explicitly:

"Nowhere does the Qur'an state that Abraham was actually, bodily thrown into the fire and miraculously kept alive in it."

Asad's interpretation of Abraham's experience with fire as a symbol of spiritual transformation and the attainment of inner peace (*salām*) echoes the views of Ibn 'Arabī, the eminent Sufi thinker. Ibn 'Arabī often emphasized that life's trials are pathways to *tahqīq* (spiritual realization) and *sakīnah* (inner tranquility), attained through deep closeness with the Divine. Just as Asad interprets *salām* not as mere physical safety but as peace of the soul, Ibn 'Arabī also viewed the prophetic trials—such as Abraham's—not as mere historical events but as stages of inner unveiling (*kashf*) leading to elevated spiritual states (*maqāmāt*). Both thinkers reject superficial readings of sacred texts, preferring to uncover their existential and psychospiritual dimensions, thereby reframing Abraham's story as a mirror of humanity's spiritual journey toward God.

"What the Qur'an gives us here, as well as in 29:24 and 37:97, is apparently an allegorical allusion to the fire of persecution which Abraham had to suffer and which, by dint of its intensity, was to become in his later life a source of spiritual strength and inner peace (*salām*). Regarding the deeper implications of the term *salām*."

Moreover, Asad notes the presence of "many elaborate (and contradictory) stories" added by later exegetes in interpreting this event. According to him, these narratives likely stem from Jewish mythologies and support the view that "Abraham was never literally thrown into the fire." Asad thus argues that such embellishments should be dismissed (Asad, 1980).

### **A Critique of Muhammad Asad's *The Message of The Qur'an***

Muhammad Asad appears to lack critical rigor in interpreting certain Qur'anic expressions, particularly the preposition "*min*" in Surah Al-ʿAnkabūt (29:24). The word "*min*" here may also suggest that Abraham did not perish in the fire because he experienced the "coolness" sent by Allah, which brought peace. In other words, it is entirely plausible that Abraham was indeed cast into a blazing fire, but was then saved due to the coolness granted by Allah. A reader could readily infer from the phrase "*fa anjabullāhu min al-nār*" ("Then Allah saved him from the fire") that Abraham was truly delivered from that fire (Al-Mahalli & As-Suyuthi, n.d.).

Asad's rejection of the literal meaning of this event may be linked to his tendency to interpret matters of the unseen, miracles, and divine intervention in the Qur'an through rational or symbolic lenses rather than literal ones. According to Asad, the "fire" mentioned in the verse is a symbol of the "persecution or suffering" that Abraham endured. In his view, the intensity of the fire reflects the immense hardship Abraham was to face in his life. Despite the weight of this suffering, Asad argues that it ultimately became a "source of spiritual strength and inner peace" for Abraham, as symbolized by the phrase "*bardan*" (coolness).

Asad's symbolic reading of Abraham's ordeal bears methodological similarities to the approach of Fazlur Rahman, a prominent modernist Muslim thinker who also emphasized the importance of contextual and rational understanding of the Qur'an. Like Asad, Rahman did not reject the spiritual dimension of the Qur'an but asserted that the revealed text must speak meaningfully to human reason and modern experience. In his "double movement" method, Rahman proposed that the Qur'anic text be interpreted within its historical context and then transformed into universal ethical principles relevant to contemporary life. The symbolic interpretation of "fire" as a trial or test, and "*bardan wa salaman*" as spiritual tranquility, represents the second stage of Rahman's method: the moral actualization of the Qur'an's message in modern realities.

In this way, both thinkers share the vision that miracles are not merely to be marveled at, but to be ethically and inspirationally interpreted for the development of character and faith in the modern world (Abū ‘Abdullah Al-Ḥārith bin Asad al-Muḥāsibī, 1411).

However, Abul A‘la al-Maududi, in his commentary on Surah Al-‘Ankabūt verse 24, firmly rejects Asad’s view. In his *Tafhīm al-Qur’ān*, al-Maududi asserts (Maududi, n.d.):

*“It is clear that if Abraham was never actually cast into the fire, then the divine command to the fire to become cool and safe would be meaningless.”*

He continues by stating that this affirms the belief that the properties of all created things are dependent on the will of Allah, and whenever He wishes, He can alter the nature of anything. By its very nature, fire burns, and all that is flammable will be consumed (Maududi, n.d.).

From this analysis, it becomes evident that Asad’s method, which allows for the dismissal of this story, could diminish the Qur’an’s significance as a timeless guide for Muslims. To disregard this story is to deny one of the events explicitly mentioned in the Qur’an, which contradicts the fundamental principles of interpreting the sacred text. If this method is applied broadly, many of the Qur’an’s miracle narratives could be seen as unnecessary to believe in literally, which in turn could undermine the authority of the text itself (Asad, 1980).

Moreover, by ignoring this story, Asad not only diverges from classical exegesis, but also opens the door to a form of interpretive relativism, potentially eroding the historical and theological dimensions of Islam. His approach, therefore, can be criticized as overly simplistic and insufficiently respectful of the traditional Islamic interpretive heritage that has developed over centuries.

## Conclusion

From the above discussion, several key criticisms can be raised regarding Muhammad Asad's interpretation. First, he places excessive emphasis on rationality and moral lessons, thus neglecting the transcendental dimension that forms the essence of miracles in Islam. Second, Asad's skepticism toward extraordinary events in the Qur'an risks deconstructing the faith of Muslims in the very miracles explicitly mentioned in the revelation. Third, his reduction of miracles to mere symbols may lead to a distorted understanding of the relationship between revelation and divine reality. Fourth, Asad's tendency to treat some miraculous stories as legend risks creating an imbalance in understanding the concept of God's absolute power (*qudrat ilāhiyyah*). Such a perspective threatens to shift theological discourse into a purely rational and historical analysis, thereby ignoring the deep spiritual values inherent in traditional tafsir.

Asad's interpretation of miracles in the Qur'an—particularly the miracle of Abraham—represents a significant effort to bridge divine messages with modern rationality. Nevertheless, his highly symbolic and moralistic approach often obscures the transcendental aspect that lies at the core of miracles in Islamic tradition. The critiques raised reflect concerns that such interpretation may weaken the community's conviction in God's absolute power and the unseen reality that transcends human logic. Reducing miracles to ethical metaphors or historical allegories risks shifting the balance of interpretation from the divine to a dry, secular discourse devoid of spiritual depth. Therefore, it is imperative for contemporary exegetes to develop integrative approaches that combine the strength of rational inquiry with reverence for the divine and the miraculous, as upheld in the rich heritage of classical tafsir.



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