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Perceptions of Jews in the Qur'an: A Critical Examination of Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar*

Abstract

Anti-Jewish sentiment remains a global concern, often linked to religious interpretations. In Indonesia, despite the small number of Jews, their presence has become more visible, though they continue to face limitations due to the lack of state recognition and Islamic hegemony. The Qur'an contains numerous verses referencing Jews, some of which are perceived as fostering negative stereotypes. This article critically examines Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar*, using a textual-analytical approach to explore his interpretation of these verses. Hamka portrays Jews as historically deceitful and hostile toward Islam, but he also warns against generalizing such traits to all Jews. Notably, his exegesis echoes themes of Zionist conspiracy, suggesting Jewish control over global finance and politics. While reflecting his sociopolitical context, Hamka's commentary raises important questions about religious interpretation, prejudice, and the boundaries of Islamic exclusivism.

Keywords: Jewish representations in the Qur'an, antisemitism, anti-Jewish sentiment, Jewish communities in Indonesia, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, Hamka, Islamic absolutism.

[1] The information about the country was included upon the author's request.

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Introduction

Judaism remains one of the few religions in Indonesia that has yet to receive formal recognition as a legally acknowledged faith. Despite this, recent years have witnessed a growing visibility of Jewish identity among its adherents, both in physical spaces and on digital platforms. Offline, this is manifested through the establishment of synagogues in selected regions, the public performance of religious rituals, and the commemoration of the Holocaust as a solemn reminder of the atrocities inflicted upon the Jewish people under Nazi rule (Balogh, 2013). In the digital sphere, the presence of Jewish communities is evidenced by organizational websites and social media accounts – on platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook – which articulate religious narratives and share community activities.

The historical presence of Judaism in the Indonesian archipelago is not a novel phenomenon. Archival sources suggest that Jewish communities had settled in the region even before the advent of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), although the historical details remain fragmentary and under-researched (Kamsma, 2010). Notwithstanding its centuries-long existence, the development of Judaism in Indonesia has encountered significant challenges, particularly during the Japanese occupation and periods when anti-Jewish sentiment gained traction in national discourse (Hadler, 2004). These dynamics raise an important reflective question: Why has Judaism remained peripheral in Indonesia, while Islam has flourished and expanded extensively?

Zaenal Abidin argues that the stagnation of Judaism in Indonesia stems from its non-proselytizing character, emphasizing ethnic descent and genealogical continuity rather than missionary outreach (Abidin, 2015; Sharot, 1980). This view, however, is challenged by Leonard Chrysostomos Epafras, who maintains that all Abrahamic traditions, including Judaism, inherently possess proselytizing elements (Epafras, 2013). Beyond these divergent interpretations, the Qur'an itself engages deeply with interreligious dynamics. For instance, surah al-Baqarah 2:120: *wa lan tarḍā ʿank al-Yahūd wa lā al-Naṣārā ḥattā tattabiʿ millatahum "Never will the Jews or Christians be pleased with you, until you follow their faith*", underscores a general tendency among religious groups to reject beliefs that diverge from their own. Psychologically, this verse may reflect a broader human inclination toward exclusivism in matters of faith – a tendency that continues to shape interreligious relations among Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

As a nation with a Muslim-majority population, Indonesia is inevitably shaped by Islamic doctrines. The Qur'an presents a complex array of teach-

ings: While some verses promote religious moderation and interfaith tolerance (Dragouni, 2015), others advocate caution or critical distance from non-Muslim communities – as illustrated in surah al-Tawbah 9:30 and al-Nisā' 4:157. In certain cases, these verses contain textual formulations that may be interpreted as expressions of critique, or even condemnation, toward particular religious groups.

In this context, the interpretive role of *mufassir* (Qur'anic exegetes) becomes crucial in shaping how such verses are understood by contemporary audiences. Textual or literalist readings of Qur'anic references to non-Muslims have increasingly come under scrutiny, particularly in efforts to safeguard social cohesion and reinforce national commitments to religious moderation. Consequently, concepts such as moderation, tolerance, and pluralism have emerged as central themes in modern Islamic discourse in Indonesia. However, this shift has also led to a tendency to marginalize or overlook verses that assert theological firmness and Islamic particularism (Muhammad, 2022).

Given this hermeneutical tension – between assertive and conciliatory Qur'anic passages – it is necessary to examine how Indonesian exegetes interpret the religious and theological position of Judaism in the Qur'an. This examination is especially relevant in light of the increasing visibility and activity of Jewish communities in both online and offline spheres in Indonesia.

A prominent figure in Indonesian *tafsir* literature is Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah (Hamka), whose *Tafsir al-Azhar* has been widely studied within academic and religious circles (Muhammad, 2024). This article focuses specifically on Hamka's interpretation of verses related to Judaism and the Jewish people. If his exegesis reveals tendencies that align with anti-Jewish sentiment, it may inadvertently foster negative perceptions among readers, potentially fueling intolerance toward Jewish communities in Indonesia and further obstructing the development and public acceptance of Judaism as a minority faith within the Indonesian context.

Hamka: Intellectual Legacy and Methodological Distinctions in *Tafsir al-Azhar*

Hamka – an acronym derived from Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah – is a name that encapsulates both the identity and legacy of one of Indonesia's most influential Muslim scholars. "Haji Abdul Malik" (d. 1945) was his personal name, while "Karim Amrullah" refers to his father, from whom he inherited both intellectual rigor and religious commitment (Usman & Abidin, 2024). Born on February 16, 1908 in Molek, a village in Maninjau, West Su-

matra, Hamka was the son of Abdul Karim Amrullah and Shofiyah binti Bagindo Nan Batuah (d. 1934) (Pramono, 2015). Both parents belonged to deeply pious lineages. His paternal ancestry links him to prominent *ulama* of the Padri movement, tracing a genealogical line through Abdul Karim, Muhammad Amrullah, and Abdullah Shaleh (Tuanku Guguk Katur), who was married to Siti Saerah – the daughter of Tuanku Pariaman and granddaughter of the eminent Padri leader Abdullah Arif (Fitri, 2020). His maternal line similarly stemmed from a devout family, affirming Hamka's position as the intellectual heir to generations of respected religious scholars.

Hamka's early education followed the customary pattern of traditional Islamic learning in the region. He began with Qur'anic recitation at home and, by the age of seven, enrolled in a formal school. A year later, he was admitted to a *madrasah diniyah* established by Zainuddin Labay (Hidayat, 2020). His days soon became wholly devoted to education: formal schooling in the morning, *madrasah* instruction in the afternoon, and Qur'anic study with his parents in the evening (Daneshgar et al., 2016). At age 10, he joined the Thawalib School founded by his father (M. Yusuf, 1995).

At 16, Hamka embarked on a self-initiated intellectual journey to Java, residing briefly in Yogyakarta and Pekalongan (Hidayat, 2020). Although his stay lasted only about a year, the experience expanded his religious and social outlook. Returning home at 17, he began speaking publicly and advocating for Islamic reform. Despite having only four years of formal education (Rauf, 2019), Hamka quickly emerged as a respected public intellectual. His reputation was cemented through frequent lectures, particularly under the auspices of the Muhammadiyah organization, and through his prolific literary output. His magnum opus, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, remains a foundational work in the landscape of Indonesian Qur'anic interpretation.

According to Munawan, Hamka was largely self-taught, particularly in the field of Islamic sciences. Nonetheless, his autodidacticism did not impede his public career (Munawan, 2018). Wahyu Pebrian has documented at least 15 significant positions Hamka held at both national and international levels, culminating in his appointment as chairman of the Indonesian Ulema Council (*Majelis Ulama Indonesia*, MUI) from 1975 to 1981. Two months after resigning from this post, he passed away on July 24, 1981 and was laid to rest at Tanah Kusir Cemetery in Jakarta (Rosowulan, 2015).

Among Hamka's many contributions, *Tafsir al-Azhar* stands as his most celebrated work and a cornerstone of modern Nusantara exegetical literature. The *tafsir* originated from a series of dawn lectures delivered at the Al-Azhar Mosque in Kebayoran Baru, Jakarta, beginning with surah al-Kahf. These lec-

tures were initially disseminated through *Gema Islam* magazine and gradually compiled into a full commentary (Alfiyah, 2016). Despite his extensive commitments, Hamka completed the work over eight years (1959–1967), including during his imprisonment from January 27, 1964 to January 21, 1967 under accusations of treason – conditions that underscore his intellectual resilience and unwavering commitment to Qur'anic scholarship.

Tafsir al-Azhar is distinguished by its stylistic clarity and contextual relevance. Hamka composed his commentary in the Indonesian language, prefacing each surah with details on its title, chronological classification (*Makkī* or *Madanī*), and verse count. His formatting is pedagogically oriented: Arabic verses are aligned on the right-hand page, with their Indonesian translations on the left, facilitating parallel reading. Rather than isolating individual verses, Hamka interprets them thematically in clusters, marked with minimal annotations and interspersed with subheadings to guide the reader. While his interpretative method draws on his own reasoning, it is deeply informed by the consensus of classical scholars, prophetic traditions, and historical narratives. However, Hamka often omits precise citations, opting instead for general references such as "according to most scholars" or "historical accounts." Islah Gusmian categorizes this model as a "non-scholarly *tafsir*," due to its lack of rigorous source attribution (Gusmian, 2013, p. 185).

To evaluate Hamka's exegetical methodology more systematically, this study applies Ridlwan Nasir's five-dimensional framework, which comprises: (1) sources of interpretation, (2) depth of analysis, (3) audience orientation and structural arrangement, (4) presentation format, and (5) interpretive style (Nasir, 2003). In terms of source, *Tafsir al-Azhar* predominantly relies on *tafsīr bi al-ra'y* (rational interpretation). With respect to depth, the work falls within the category of *tafsīr tafṣīlī*. Structurally, it follows the canonical order of the Qur'an – from surah al-Fātiḥah to surah al-Nās – qualifying it as *tafsīr muṣḥafī*. Its presentation is best described as *tafsīr taḥlīlī*, focusing sequentially on the Qur'anic text without extensive cross-referencing. Stylistically, the *tafsir* reflects the sociocultural dynamics of mid-20th-century Indonesia and incorporates a discernible Sufi ethos. These elements position *Tafsir al-Azhar* within the broader category of *tafsīr al-Adabī al-Ijtimā'ī* (literary-sociological exegesis) (Amir et al., 2024).

Doctrinally, Hamka's jurisprudential orientation aligns with the Hanafi school. For example, in his discussion of ritual purity, he argues that physical contact between men and women does not invalidate *wuḍū'* (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 3, pp. 1635–1636), a position consistent with Hanafi jurisprudence and substantiated by relevant *ḥadīth* (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 3, pp. 1635–1636). Theologically, however, his position is more nuanced. As a prominent Mu-

hammadiyah figure, he did not adhere to the Ashʿarī or Māturidī schools associated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), although certain doctrinal overlaps are evident. Muhammadiyah theology, which emphasizes moral and ethical dimensions of faith, is clearly reflected in Hamka's exegetical vision. While critical of theological conservatism, he distanced himself from Wahhabi literalism, thereby offering a more contextualized and culturally attuned interpretation of Islamic doctrine.

Islam as the Only Path: Hamka's Absolutist Interpretation of Exclusivist Verses in the Qur'an

The Qur'an, comprising 114 surahs, contains numerous verses that assert the exclusivity of Islam. These verses – often interpreted as affirmations of Islam's absolute truth – have elicited varied interpretations among Muslim scholars, shaped by their theological perspectives: pluralist, exclusivist, or inclusivist. Pluralist scholars typically soften the absolutist tone of these verses to allow for the recognition of salvific truth in other religions. By contrast, exclusivists and inclusivists tend to uphold the absolute superiority of Islam.

Hamka, a leading Indonesian Islamic scholar and figure in the Muhammadiyah movement, offers a distinctive approach to interpreting Qur'anic verses that express Islamic absolutism (Sachedina, 2010). According to Buster G. Smith's theory of religious pluralism, religious organizations are more inclined toward exclusivist or inclusivist frameworks and generally resist pluralist interpretations (Smith, 2007). To assess the validity of this theory, this article examines Hamka's interpretation of key absolutist verses in his influential work, *Tafsir al-Azhar*.

Imtiyaz Yusuf, professor at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), identifies two core verses that encapsulate Islamic absolutism: surah Āli ʿImrān 3:19 and 3:85 (I. Yusuf, 2010). However, his analysis is considered limited, as numerous other verses similarly reinforce Islam's claim to exclusive truth.[2] Thus, this study highlights several verses interpreted by Hamka to uncover his understanding of Islamic absolutism.

In his exegesis of surah al-Fātiḥah 1:6: *Ṣirāṭ al-Dhīn anʿamt ʿalayhim ghyir al-Maghḍūb ʿalayhim wa lā al-Ḍāllīn "The path of those You have blessed, not*

[2] The verses of the Qur'an which are the absolute foundation of the Islamic religion brought by the Prophet Muhammad, apart from surah Āli ʿImrān 3:19 and 85, are: surah al-Māidah 5:3, al-Anʿām 6:125, al-Tawbah 9:29, 33, 36, Yūsuf 12:40 and 108, al-Naḥl 16:52, al-Rūm 30:30, Luqmān 31:22, al-Zumar 39:3 and 22, al-Fatḥ 48:28, al-Ḥujurāt 49:14, and al-Ṣaf 61:9.

of those who have incurred [Your] wrath nor of those who have gone astray" Hamka emphasizes that the religion brought by the Prophet Muhammad is the only true faith (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 1, p. 80), characterized by monotheism and guided by the Qur'an. Although other religions, such as Christianity, invoke the name of God, Hamka asserts that their reference is directed toward Jesus Christ, whom he views not as the One Supreme God but as a component of the Trinitarian doctrine – an innovation Hamka considers a theological deviation (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 1, pp. 68–69).

Hamka's interpretation of this verse serves as a foundation for understanding his notion of Islamic absolutism. He writes that Islam does not only denote the religion brought by the Prophet Muhammad but also refers to a state of genuine submission to God, as in the following statement:

> One who has surrendered himself to the One God, without associating partners with Him, regardless of the religion he formally professes, has essentially attained Islam. (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 2, p. 733)

Some scholars (Ali, 2023; Aziz et al., 2020; Hamdi, 2021; Mahmudin, 2019) interpret this statement as indicative of Hamka's support for religious pluralism – particularly in relation to surah al-Baqarah 2:62: *Inn al-Dhīn amanū wa al-Dhīn Hādu wa al-Naṣārā wa al-Ṣābi'īn man āman billāh wa al-Yawm al-Akhīr wa 'amil ṣāliḥa fa lahum ajruhum 'ind rabbihim wa lā khawf 'alayhim wa lā hum yaḥzanūn "Indeed, those who believe, and those who are Jews, and Christians, and Sabians – whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good – will have their reward with their Lord. No fear will there be upon them, nor will they grieve*." However, such readings overlook Hamka's broader interpretive context. He later clarifies:

> Belief in Allah necessarily entails belief in all revelations sent to His messengers, without discrimination among them. One must believe in the four revealed books. The coming of the Prophet Muhammad as the seal of the prophets, bringing the Qur'an as the final revelation, completes the unity of humanity and the unity of divine guidance. Therefore, those who truly believe in God must also accept the final Prophet and his revelation. If they reject it after the truth has come to them, then Hell is their inevitable end. (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 1, p. 209)

This clarification reveals that pluralist interpretations of Hamka's theology are, at best, partial. He consistently maintains that Islam, as conveyed by the Prophet Muhammad, is the only legitimate path, while other religions are considered deviations.

Although Hamka acknowledges that the essence of all religions is to submit to God, he confines this notion to two primary aims: (1) purifying the

soul from metaphysical fears and worshiping only Allah; and (2) cultivating sincerity in all actions (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 2, p. 733). Nevertheless, Hamka ultimately affirms that the true religion is Islam, as revealed to Muhammad. In interpreting surah Āli ʻImrān 3:20: *fa in ḥājjūk fa qul aslamt wajhiy lillāh wa man ittabaʿan "If they argue with you, say: 'I have submitted my face to Allah, and so have those who follow me'"* Hamka writes:

> If the People of the Book continue to dispute with you (Muhammad), then declare openly that you and your followers have taken a firm stand: submission to God – in other words, Islam. (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 2, p. 736)

In his commentary on surah Āli ʻImrān 3:19: *inn al-Dīn ʻind Allah al-Islām wa mā ikhtalaf al-dhīn ūtū al-kitāb illā min bād mā jāahum al-ʻilm baghya baynahum "Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam…"* Hamka explains that the rejection of Islam by Jews and Christians results from the control of clerics who distorted monotheistic teachings for political and worldly interests (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 2, p. 734). This interpretation underscores his belief that religions other than Islam, post-Muhammad, represent theological deviations.

Hamka reiterates this in surah Āli ʻImrān 3:85: *wa man yabtagh ghayr al-Islām dīnā fa lan yuqbal "Whoever seeks a religion other than Islam – it will never be accepted from him…"* For Hamka, Islam is the continuation and culmination of all prior prophetic teachings, destined for universal application. He stresses that Islam is not merely a label, but a doctrine of pure monotheism and obedience to the Prophet. He also critiques Muslims who adhere to superstition and excessive grave visitation, equating them with the theological distortions of Jews and Christians (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 2, p. 829).

In surah al-Māidah 5:3: *al-Yawm akmalt lakum dīnakum wa atmamt ʿalaykum niʿmatīwa raḍýt lakum al-Islām dīnā "Today I have perfected your religion for you…"* Hamka affirms that Islam is complete in its creed, rituals, social conduct, and legal system. With this verse, divine legislation concludes. Thus, all of humanity is obligated to follow Islam, as previous laws have been abrogated (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 3, p. 1611).

Hamka also believes that every human heart contains seeds of righteousness that can flourish under proper *daʻwah*. Those who accept Islam have their past sins erased. Conversely, in surah al-Anʻām 6:125: *wa man yurd an yuḍillah yajʻal ṣadrah ḍayyqā ḥarajā ka annmā yaṣṣaʻad fī al-samāʾ "…as if he were climbing into the sky"* Hamka likens those who reject Islam to terminally ill patients incapable of accepting truth (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 3, p. 2183).

Regarding accusations that Islam promotes violence and terrorism – frequently associated with Islamophobia (Şahin, 2019) – Hamka rejects such

claims in his exegesis of surah al-Tawbah 9:29: *Qātilūal-dhīn lā yu'minūn bil-lāh wa lā bi la-Yawm al-Ākhir wa lā yuḥarrimūn mā ḥarramallāh wa rasūluh wa lā yadīnūn dīn al-Ḥaqq min al-Dhīn ūtūal-Kitāb ḥattā yu'ṭū al-Jizyah 'an yad wa ṣāghirūn "Fight those who do not believe in Allah or the Last Day…"* He argues that the command to fight is not rooted in fanaticism but aims to awaken non-Muslims to the truth of Islam. He adds that Christianity has deviated by adopting the Trinity and rejecting Muhammad's prophethood.

Hamka further reinforces this in his commentary on surah al-Rūm 30:30 and al-Zumar 39:22, which emphasize the inherent disposition (*fiṭrah*) toward monotheism. Likewise, in surah al-Fatḥ 48:28 and al-Ṣaff 61:9, Hamka affirms that Islam will inevitably triumph despite opposition (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 9, p. 7342).

> From all this, it can be concluded that attempts to extinguish Allah's light with words will fail. Allah will complete His light. (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 9, p. 7346)

In conclusion, Hamka consistently affirms the absolutism of Islam. For him, the Islam brought by Prophet Muhammad is the only true religion. Religions that persist after Muhammad's advent are seen as theologically corrupted and no longer valid. Consequently, any claim that all religions equally lead to salvation stands in direct contradiction to Hamka's interpretive and theological framework, despite attempts by modern pluralist scholars to suggest otherwise.

The Narrative of Suspicion in *Tafsir al-Azhar*: Hamka's View on Jews

In Hamka's interpretation, Islam as conveyed by the Prophet Muhammad is regarded as the only true religion, rooted in the legacy of the previous prophets. Hamka asserts that other religions have undergone a distortion of their original purity due to the political interventions of rulers and religious elites with vested interests.

Hamka's theological absolutism is also reflected in his stance toward non-Muslim communities, particularly Jews and Christians. Notably, in his exegesis of Qur'anic verses pertaining to Jews, Hamka often draws parallels with the Christian community rather than treating Jews as an isolated subject. This interconnection makes the study of Hamka's interpretation of verses concerning Jews particularly relevant – especially given the global attention during his lifetime to issues such as anti-Jewish sentiment, Zionism (Dolińska-Rydzek, 2022), and the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 (Muhammad et al., 2024).

As a preliminary note, Hamka does not homogenize the Jewish community as inherently immoral. He emphasizes that although many negative behaviors can be observed among them, there are also individuals who are honest and trustworthy. When addressing Qur'anic verses that criticize Jewish conduct, Hamka clarifies that the reproach is directed specifically at those who are hypocritical and reject the truth. On surah Āli 'Imrān 3:77: *Inn al-Dhīn yashtarūn bi 'ahdillāh wa aymānihim thamanan qalīlan "Indeed, those who trade Allah's covenant and their oaths for a small price"* Hamka comments:

> Just because the Jews oppose Islam, one should not assume that all Jews are wicked. This verse clarifies that among them are those who are trustworthy, though some are indeed deceitful and dishonest. (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 2, p. 812)

Based on this, Hamka calls upon Muslims to exercise justice and avoid hasty generalizations. He asserts that immoral behavior is not exclusive to Jews or non-Muslims but can also be found among Muslims themselves. Nonetheless, Hamka cautions Muslims to remain vigilant, citing a prophetic warning regarding the potential deception of some among the People of the Book.

Thus, Hamka reminds Muslims to act justly and not to accuse others indiscriminately. According to him, evil is not only found among Semitic peoples or non-Muslims but may also be present among Muslims themselves. However, he advises Muslims to remain cautious toward the Semitic people, citing Prophet Muhammad's warning to be wary of some People of the Book, who might desire to bring Muslims back to the darkness of the pre-Islamic era of ignorance:

> The Prophet Muhammad warned the believers to always be cautious and alert, lest they follow the will of some among the People of the Book. Do not heed their flattery, for their intent is to lead you back into disbelief… to return you from the light of faith to the darkness of ignorance. If this occurs, you will weaken after having been strong. And once weakened, the Jews will again dominate you. (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 2, p. 816)

However, Hamka does not cite the source of this hadith, raising questions about its authenticity. Despite this, *Tafsir al-Azhar* is often perceived as having anti-Jewish undertones, particularly in its exegesis of verses concerning the Jewish community. Hamka portrays Jews as harboring an ambition to destroy Islam, a sense of superiority, and a desire to dominate the world through manipulation and propaganda.

In interpreting surah al-Baqarah 2:12: *alā innahum hum al-Mufsidūn wa lākin lā tash'urūn "Indeed, it is they who are the corrupters, but they perceive it*

not", Hamka identifies the verse as referring to Jews who aim to undermine Islam. He contends that had they remained faithful to the original teachings of the Torah, hostility toward Islam would not have emerged. But due to the corruption of their scripture, enmity toward Islam developed (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 1, p. 129). Consequently, Hamka argues that Muslims are commanded to combat them, with the objective of guiding them back to monotheistic belief (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 4, p. 2915). He distinguishes between the Torah and the Talmud, maintaining that while Jews tend to follow the latter, it has been contaminated by human reasoning and external cultural influences.

Hamka further highlights traits he attributes to Jews, such as arrogance, a sense of superiority, and resistance to truth from external sources. He references European history, wherein Jews were viewed as a cursed people who were to be excluded from society (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 1, p. 186). Their belief in being a chosen people, he suggests, contributed to their social rejection (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 1, p. 285).

Propaganda also forms a central theme in Hamka's commentary. He notes that during the Prophet's time, Jews actively spread misinformation about several companions, including Muʿadh ibn Jabal, Ḥudhayfah ibn al-Yamān, and ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir. According to Hamka, such tactics continue to this day, targeting Muslims through various means (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 2, p. 805). He attributes the success of these efforts to Jewish dominance in global financial systems.

While interpreting surah al-Baqarah 2:7: *khatama Allāh ʿalā qulūbihim wa ʿalā samʿihim wa ʿalā abṣārihim ghishāwah "Allah has set a seal upon their hearts and upon their hearing, and over their eyes is a veil"*, Hamka critiques the extent of Jewish influence in global economics, especially through usurious practices:

> The influence of the Jews on the world economy is so vast that we Muslims are compelled to participate in an interest-based financial system, as we currently lack alternatives. (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 1, p. 125)

He further remarks that Jewish religious teachings are primarily focused on worldly wealth and that usury is embedded in their religious ethos. He cites the example of American banks closing both on Saturdays and Sundays, reflecting the financial dominance of Jewish bankers on Wall Street (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 1, p. 187).

In surah al-Nisāʾ 4:161: *wa akhdhihim al-Ribā wa qad nuhū ʿanh wa aklihim amwāl al-Nās bi al-Bāṭil "And [for] their taking of usury while they had been forbidden from it, and their consuming of the people's wealth unjustly"*,

Hamka reiterates the points made above, further emphasizing the financial dominance of the Semitic people. He explains that Semitic economic control is pervasive in capitalist nations. Referring to the Book of Deuteronomy, Chapter 23, Verse 20, he quotes: "From foreigners you may take interest, but not from your brother, so that the Lord your God may bless you in everything you put your hand to in the land you are entering to possess." Hamka concludes from this chapter that:

> This verse has served as a guide for Jews worldwide up to our time. Even if they are not part of a government, they still control it through the interest they charge on their loans. (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 2, p. 1551)

Similarly, in interpreting surah al-Mā'idah 5:64: *wa alqaynā baynahum al-ʿAdāwah wa al-Baghḍā' ilā yawm al-Qiyāmah "And We have cast among them animosity and hatred until the Day of Resurrection*", Hamka asserts:

> Once wealthy and in control of global finance, they use that wealth to enact vengeance. For example, in wars between Western Christian nations, Jews offer financial support to both sides. They profit from interest while those nations crumble from within. Even Hollywood, which influences global materialist culture, is largely financed by Jewish capital. (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 3, p. 1794)

Hamka argues that Jews fund both sides in wartime not out of loyalty but to secure double profits: first, financial gains from interest, and second, affirmation of their identity as a divinely chosen people. Thus, in *Tafsir al-Azhar*, he concludes that one of the inherent traits of the Jewish people is a proclivity for violence, particularly against those they dislike. He cites the killing of prophets such as Zechariah and John (Yahya), and the alleged three assassination attempts on Prophet Muhammad, as evidence. For Hamka, murder serves as a Jewish strategy to silence dissent and preserve inherited belief structures – not only against prophets but against anyone striving for truth and justice (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 2, p. 738).

In interpreting surah al-Baqarah 2:62: *man āman billāh wa al-yawm al-ākhir wa ʿamila ṣāliḥan "Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and acts righteously*", Hamka identifies a dissonance between Jewish profession and practice. Although they claim adherence to the Torah, he argues, they do not implement its teachings. He posits that genuine faith in the Torah would necessitate belief in God, the Last Day, and righteous conduct – all of which, he asserts, logically imply recognition of the Prophet Muhammad as the final messenger (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 1, p. 205). Hamka adds that the Jewish reluctance to acknowledge the afterlife may stem from the absence of eschatological discussions in the Torah. He supports this with the following narration:

"Some suggest that the Jewish obsession with wealth and their apparent desire to live a thousand years stems from the Torah's silence on the afterlife." (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 1, p. 246)

Although inviting Jews to Islam is a religious obligation, Hamka expresses skepticism about the potential success of such efforts, arguing that Jews' intrinsic dishonesty impedes genuine conversion (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 1, p. 226). This interpretation aligns with Nawawi al-Bantani's *Marāḥ Labīd* in its commentary on surah al-Baqarah 2:7 (Muhammad, 2022).

Hamka further asserts that Jewish scripture – specifically the Old Testament – contains prophecies regarding the coming of the final prophet. Yet, Jews deny that these prophecies refer to Muhammad, contending that the awaited prophet has not yet arrived. In conclusion, Hamka states: "If there were no deceit and suppression of the truth, the content of the Torah would be no different from the Qur'an" (Amrullah, 1982, vol. 2, p. 739).

Conclusion

Hamka's *Tafsir al-Azhar* stands as one of the most influential works of Qur'anic exegesis to emerge from Indonesia. This commentary is characterized by its distinctive interpretive style, which integrates a contextual sociocultural approach that resonates with the Indonesian milieu. As a leading figure within one of Indonesia's major Islamic organizations, Hamka approaches the Qur'an with a firm commitment to Islamic orthodoxy. In line with this, he asserts unequivocally that Islam, as conveyed by the Prophet Muhammad, constitutes the sole divinely sanctioned religion. This assertion is based on the conviction that Islam represents a continuation and culmination of the messages delivered by earlier prophets, whose teachings are affirmed in previous scriptures. Accordingly, with the advent of Muhammad as the final prophet, all of humanity – including adherents of prior religious traditions – is, in principle, obligated to embrace Islam, as mandated in the earlier revealed texts. However, while affirming the exclusivity of Islam's truth claims, Hamka firmly opposes coercion in matters of faith. He maintains that non-Muslims must not be forced to convert to Islam, a position rooted in Qur'anic principles of religious freedom. This view underpins his conception of interreligious tolerance, which, although grounded in Islamic doctrine, does not extend to endorsing religious pluralism in its theological sense.

Notably, *Tafsir al-Azhar* also contains recurring critiques of the Jewish community, often articulated in a manner that borders on generalization. In several passages, the text adopts a tone that contemporary readers may

associate with anti-Jewish sentiment. Some of Hamka's interpretations align with what are now widely referred to as Zionist conspiracy theories – particularly those suggesting that Jewish groups exert disproportionate influence over global financial systems, manipulate political power structures, and act as shadow figures behind world leadership. These narratives echo elements of long-standing conspiratorial discourses that have historically targeted Jewish communities. Such claims have been the subject of widespread scholarly criticism. Contemporary researchers argue that these conspiracy theories are not only empirically unsubstantiated but also serve to reinforce harmful religious and ethnic stereotypes. They risk perpetuating prejudice and discrimination, particularly when such portrayals are framed in religious terms or embedded in authoritative religious texts. From a critical perspective, these elements in *Tafsir al-Azhar* demand careful scholarly scrutiny – both for their theological implications and for their potential sociopolitical consequences in multicultural societies.

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Pandangan tentang Orang Yahudi dalam al-Qur'an: Telaah Kritis atas Tafsir al-Azhar karya Hamka

Sentimen anti-Yahudi tetap menjadi isu global yang kompleks dan kerap dikaitkan dengan penafsiran keagamaan. Di Indonesia, meskipun komunitas Yahudi berjumlah sangat kecil, eksistensinya mulai terlihat, namun tetap menghadapi berbagai keterbatasan akibat minimnya pengakuan negara dan dominasi narasi keislaman. Al-Qur'an memuat sejumlah ayat yang merujuk kepada kaum Yahudi, sebagian di antaranya dinilai memperkuat stereotip negatif. Artikel ini

mengkaji secara kritis *Tafsir al-Azhar* karya Hamka dengan pendekatan tekstual-analitis untuk menelaah penafsirannya terhadap ayat-ayat tersebut. Hamka menggambarkan kaum Yahudi sebagai kelompok yang secara historis bersikap curang dan memusuhi Islam, namun ia juga menegaskan agar umat Islam tidak menggeneralisasi karakteristik tersebut. Menariknya, penafsirannya turut merepresentasikan narasi konspiratif ala Zionisme, yang menyiratkan dominasi Yahudi atas sistem keuangan dan politik global. Tafsir Hamka, meskipun kontekstual dengan dinamika sosial-politik zamannya, memunculkan wacana kritis mengenai batas-batas eksklusivisme Islam, bias tafsir, dan potensi prasangka dalam interpretasi keagamaan.

Kata Kunci: Yahudi dalam al-Qur'an, Anti-Semitism, Anti-Orang Yahudi, Yahudi di Indonesia, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, Hamka, Absolutism Islam.

Postrzeganie Żydów w Koranie. Krytyczna analiza tafsiru *al-Azhar* autorstwa Hamki

Antyżydowskie sentymenty pozostają globalnym i złożonym zagadnieniem, które często wiąże się z interpretacjami religijnymi. W Indonezji, chociaż społeczność żydowska jest bardzo nieliczna, jej obecność zaczyna być zauważalna. Wciąż jednak napotyka na liczne ograniczenia wynikające z braku oficjalnego uznania przez państwo oraz dominacji narracji muzułmańskiej. Koran zawiera szereg wersetów odnoszących się do Żydów, z których część bywa interpretowana jako wzmocnienie negatywnych stereotypów. Niniejszy artykuł dokonuje krytycznej analizy *Tafsiru al-Azhar* autorstwa Hamki, stosując podejście tekstualno-analityczne w celu zbadania jego interpretacji tychże wersetów.

Hamka przedstawia Żydów jako grupę, która w ujęciu historycznym działała nieuczciwie i była wroga wobec islamu, jednocześnie jednak podkreślając, że muzułmanie nie powinni uogólniać tych cech na całą społeczność żydowską. Co interesujące, jego interpretacja zawiera również elementy narracji spiskowej charakterystycznej dla ideologii syjonistycznej, sugerując dominację Żydów w systemach finansowych i politycznych na świecie. *Tafsir* Hamki, choć osadzony w kontekście społeczno-politycznych realiów jego czasów, rodzi pytania krytyczne na temat granic ekskluzywizmu muzułmańskiego, stronniczości egzegezy oraz potencjalnych uprzedzeń obecnych w interpretacjach religijnych.

Słowa kluczowe: Żydzi w Koranie, antysemityzm, antyżydowskość, społeczność żydowska w Indonezji, *Tafsir al-Azhar*, Hamka, islamski absolutyzm.

Przekład z języka z języka indonezyjskiego
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